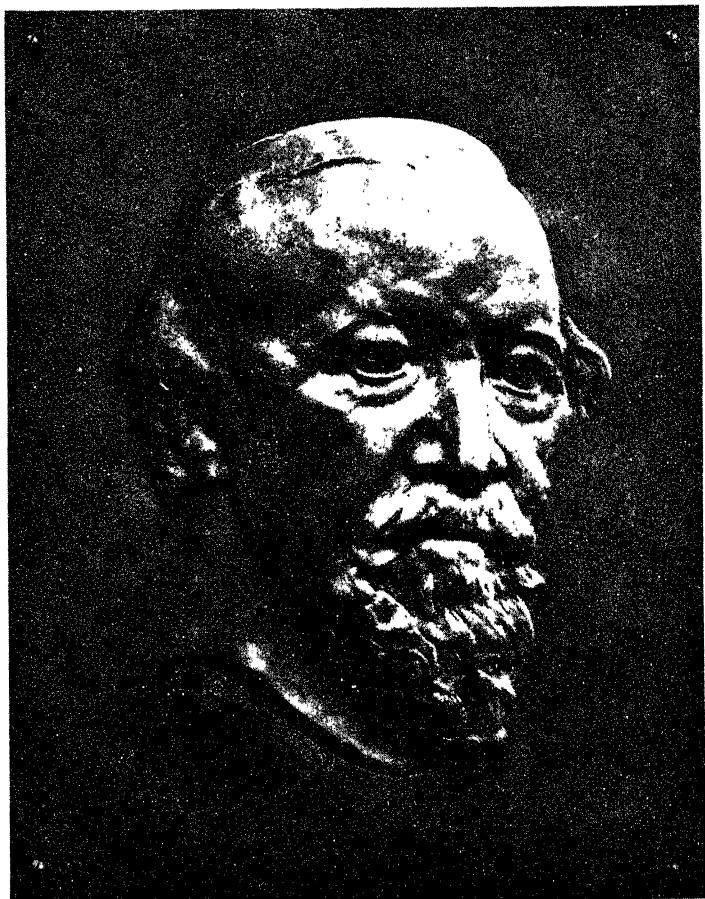


ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS

CENTENARY EDITION

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME VIII



*Emory Walker Ph. sc.*

*Robert Browning*  
(aged 76)

*From the bronze medallion by Gustav Natorp, 1888,  
in the possession of Reginald J. Smith Esq., R.C.*

# THE WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
SIR F. G. KENYON, K.C.B., D.LITT.

VOLUME VIII — ARISTOPHANES'  
APOLOGY — THE INN ALBUM —  
THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS



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# INTRODUCTION

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

DURING his summer holiday of 1872, while he was still collecting and meditating on the material for *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, Browning was reading Aeschylus. In the early summer of 1873, when the Norman tragedy was off his hands, he was translating the *Hercules Furens* of Euripides ; and during the holiday of 1874, which he and Miss Browning spent at Mers, near Tréport, in company with Miss Egerton Smith, he was engaged in incorporating this translation in that "last adventure of Balaustion," to which he gave the name of *Aristophanes' Apology*. During the two months that were spent at Mers, he was working at it strenuously, with the renewed energy which the change from the London season to the little seaside places of France always gave him ; and early in 1875 this, his longest poem with the exception of *Sordello* and *The Ring and the Book*, was published.

The scheme of the poem connects it with *Balaustion's Adventure*, and, like it, it contains a translation of one of the dramas of Euripides ; but whereas in the earlier work the main object

## INTRODUCTION

was the translation, with which the comparatively slight setting was inextricably interwoven, in *Aristophanes' Apology* the main interest is in the setting, and the translation might be detached, or "taken as read," without affecting the main theme. The real subject is the discussion of the merits of Euripides, which is supposed to take place between Balaustion and Aristophanes on the evening of the day when the latter had won the prize for comedy with his *Thesmophoriazusae*, and when the news had come of the death of Euripides in far-away Thrace. This discussion is complete in itself; the translation of the *Hercules* is only introduced by way of illustration of Balaustion's triumphant advocacy of her beloved poet. It is a fine translation of a fine—though by no means perfect—play; but its interest is eclipsed by Browning's own poem.

For the general public, *Aristophanes' Apology* labours under the difficulty that it abounds with allusions which require a considerable knowledge of Greek literature and history. Browning did not underrate the amount of information demanded of the reader when he told Dr. Furnivall (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, 1st series, ii. 4) that "the allusions require a knowledge of the Scholia, besides acquaintance with the 'Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta,'—Athenaeus, Alciphron, and so forth, not forgotten." Browning was not a classical scholar in the technical or professional sense of the term, but he had read much and discursively, and he absorbed what he read so

## INTRODUCTION

thoroughly that, although he wrote at a distance from his books, the poem abounds in references which it needs no little learning to recognise and trace. Without a general acquaintance with Greek literature, the main points at issue, and the intensity of feeling aroused by them, cannot be appreciated; and without the special knowledge thus postulated many of the phrases and allusions are unintelligible. For Browning's fame and the reputation of the poem this is unfortunate; for *Aristophanes' Apology* deserves to rank very high in respect both of intellectual force and of sheer poetry. To the lovers of Greek literature it is a classical presentation of one of its everlasting problems, a problem which will never be solved nor lose its attractions so long as Greek poetry is read. It is a problem of conflicting tastes, of different ideals and aims, a clash, not of good with evil, but of good with good: and it is presented by Browning with extraordinary dramatic power, with wonderful sympathy towards both sides, and with great and varied beauty of expression. The poem abounds with beauties,—the wonderful description of the fall of Athens, with which it opens, the news of the death of Euripides, the apparition of Aristophanes, "tolerably drunk" after the celebration of his victory, the vision of the "old pale-swathed majesty" of Sophocles, the lay of Thamuris, the dignified conclusion; and the human interest, the bearing of literature upon life and character, dominates the whole, without the least taint of

## INTRODUCTION

didacticism. It is a drama of contending forces, set forth with admirable vivacity and with a whiter heat of inspiration than perhaps any of the other poems after 1870. It is a striking proof of Browning's power of throwing himself into the cause which, for the moment, he represents, that many will feel that the case for Aristophanes is stated with more effect than the case for Euripides, although the poet's own sympathies are with the latter.

## THE INN ALBUM

*Aristophanes' Apology* was published in May, 1875; and, by the end of July, Domett was able to record in his diary that Browning had finished nine-tenths of a new poem already (Hall Griffin and Minchin, *Life*, p. 257). The whole poem only occupied two months in composition. During the summer holiday, spent this year at Villers, on the coast of Normandy, the proofs were corrected; and in November, only six months after the publication of his previous volume, *The Inn Album* appeared. It is again a study of a tragedy, and of a tragedy in real and recent life. Domett records that Browning had originally intended to write it in regular dramatic form, but on hearing that Tennyson was engaged on a tragedy, he abandoned the idea and cast his poem into the form of dialogue strung together on a thread of narrative.

There appears to be no evidence to show what

## INTRODUCTION

attracted Browning's attention to the subject of this poem. The events on which it was based were not of quite new occurrence. They formed an episode in the career, more notorious than reputable, of Henry William, Lord de Ros, who died in 1839, and Browning told Domett that he had heard the story "thirty odd years ago." The story was not a pleasant one: an old gambler sets out to fleece an inexperienced but wealthy youth, but by the perversity of luck is himself shorn: and he proposes to liquidate his debt by handing over to the youth a lady whom he has himself seduced. In the original story the youth assents, but the lady, on the scheme being broached to her, committed suicide. Browning takes only the general outline of the actual occurrences, and raises the story to a higher plane of dramatic interest and moral value; and the result is a poem which, though it cannot be pleasant, is certainly impressive, and in which the reader's interest is retained right up to the dramatic catastrophe with which it concludes. It has not the grandeur or the poetry or the wide enduring interest of *Aristophanes' Apology*; but in the circumstances of its production it is a remarkable *tour de force*, and a wonderful proof of the vigour and versatility of its author's genius at the age of sixty-three.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS

In strict chronological order of publication, the *Agamemnon* should follow *Pacchiarotto*; in logical order of evolution it should be placed next to *Aristophanes' Apology*, to which its origin was due. After the publication of the latter, Thomas Carlyle, for whom Browning had the greatest admiration and affection, told him that he ought to translate all the Greek tragedians; and although Browning did not take up the task immediately (his next volume being *The Inn Album*, and that being followed by *Pacchiarotto*), he did eventually (and perhaps concurrently with these) undertake so much of it as to produce this version of what most scholars regard as the masterpiece of the Attic drama. It appeared in the autumn of 1877, the preface (an unusual appearance of the poet in his own person) being dated on October 1st of that year.

It is not likely that Carlyle repeated his recommendation after reading Browning's version of the *Agamemnon*; for indeed it is hard to say much in its favour, and it is not easy to understand the spirit in which it was produced. That Browning felt some explanation to be necessary is evident from his unusual indulgence in a preface; but it cannot be said that the explanation is satisfactory. The principle of translation which he asserts and defends,—“to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our

## INTRODUCTION

language"—is radically false ; for here, as well as elsewhere, is it true that "the letter killeth." It can (unless it is carried so far as to be more obscure than the original) produce a serviceable "crib" to assist the student of the original tongue; it cannot in any true sense "translate" it, or represent it to a person unacquainted with Greek. It was not the method pursued by Browning when dealing with his favourite Euripides ; and it may be suspected that his practice is a truer indication of his real feelings than his theory. If he wished to carry further the controversy as to the rival merits of Aeschylus and Euripides, it was hardly fair to weight the scales in this way. A passage in the preface would seem to hint that he wished to discredit the claim of perfection of style which is often made on behalf of the Greeks ; but it is difficult to suppose that he considered his method of procedure a fair one. Extreme literalness of translation into a language of wholly different structure and character would ruin the style of the most perfect artists in literature,—of Virgil and Milton, no less than of Aeschylus and Sophocles. The result must stand as a perverse *tour de force*, only partially redeemed by the rough vigour of some of the choric odes.

An additional, and particularly unintelligible, perversity is shown in the metre chosen to represent the Greek iambic. Why Browning should have regarded an eleven-syllabled line,—a blank verse with a superfluous syllable at the end of

## INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

each line—as a better counterpart of the Greek metre of six iambic feet (or their equivalent) than ordinary blank verse passes comprehension. The result is peculiarly unfortunate, and gives a monotony to the non-choric passages which is neither fair to the original nor pleasing in itself.

The greater the reader's admiration for Aeschylus and Browning, the deeper must be his regret that their collocation should have done so little justice to either.

It may be observed further, though the matter is of less importance, that Browning is not quite happy in his defence of his method of spelling Greek names. If Greek and English vowel sounds were identical, transliteration would no doubt be the correct procedure; but since they are not, transliteration is often as far from the truth as the more common Latinisation. "Thoukudides," pronounced with the English vowel sounds, is at least as bad as "Thucydides" pronounced with the English consonantal sounds. The reformed pronunciation of classical languages, now generally adopted in English schools, will eventually bring salvation in this matter.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY . . . . .	I
THE INN ALBUM . . . . .	193
THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS . . . . .	291

## PORTRAIT

ROBERT BROWNING (AGED 76)

*From the bronze medallion by Gustav Natorp (1888) in the  
possession of Reginald J. Smith, Esq., K.C. . . . .* FRONTISPIECE

*PERSONS IN THE  
TRANSCRIBED PLAY OF "HERAKLES"*

AMPHITRUON

MEGARA

LUKOS

HERAKLES

IRIS

LUTTA (*Madness*)

*Messenger*

THESEUS

*Choros of Aged Thebans*

ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY  
INCLUDING  
A TRANSCRIPT FROM EURIPIDES  
BEING THE  
LAST ADVENTURE OF BALAUCTION

*οὐκ ἔσθω κενέβρει' • ὁπόταν δὲ θύῃς τι κάλει με.*

I eat no carrion ; when you sacrifice  
Some cleanly creature—call me for a slice !

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

1875

WIND, wave, and bark, bear Euthukles and me,  
Balaustion, from—not sorrow but despair,  
Not memory but the present and its pang !  
Athenai, live thou hearted in my heart :  
Never, while I live, may I see thee more, 5  
Never again may these repugnant orbs  
Ache themselves blind before the hideous pomp,  
The ghastly mirth which mocked thine overthrow  
—Death's entry, Haides' outrage !

Doomed to die,—

Fire should have flung a passion of embrace 10  
About thee till, resplendently inarmed,  
(Temple by temple folded to his breast,  
All thy white wonder fainting out in ash)  
Lightly some vaporous sigh of soul escaped,  
And so the Immortals bade Athenai back ! 15  
Or earth might sunder and absorb thee, save,  
Buried below Olumpos and its gods,  
Akropolis to dominate her realm  
For Koré, and console the ghosts ; or, sea,  
What if thy watery plural vastitude, 20  
Rolling unanimous advance, had rushed,  
Might upon might, a moment,—stood, one stare,  
Sea-face to city-face, thy glaucous wave  
Glassing that marbled last magnificence,—  
Till fate's pale tremulous foam-flower tipped the  
grey, 25

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And when wave broke and overswarmed and,  
sucked  
To bounds back, multitudinously ceased,  
Let land again breathe unconfused with sea,  
Attiké was, Athenai was not now !

Such end I could have borne, for I had shared. 30  
But this which, glanced at, aches within my orbs  
To blinding,—bear me thence, bark, wind and  
wave !

Me, Euthukles, and, hearted in each heart,  
Athenai, undisgraced as Pallas' self,  
Bear to my birthplace, Helios' island-bride, 35  
Zeus' darling: thither speed us, homeward-bound,  
Wafted already twelve hours' sail away  
From horror, nearer by one sunset Rhodes !

Why should despair be? Since, distinct above  
Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind 40  
And floats the cloud, free transport for our soul  
Out of its fleshly durance dim and low,—  
Since disembodied soul anticipates  
(Thought-borne as now, in rapturous unrestraint)  
Above all crowding, crystal silentness, 45  
Above all noise, a silver solitude :—  
Surely, where thought so bears soul, soul in time  
May permanently bide, "assert the wise,"  
There live in peace, there work in hope once more—  
O nothing doubt, Philemon ! Greed and strife, 50  
Hatred and cark and care, what place have they  
In yon blue liberality of heaven ?  
How the sea helps ! How rose-smit earth will rise  
Breast-high thence, some bright morning, and be  
Rhodes !

Heaven, earth and sea, my warrant—in their name, 55  
Believe—o'er falsehood, truth is surely sphered,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

O'er ugliness beams beauty, o'er this world  
 Extends that realm where, "as the wise assert,"  
 Philemon, thou shalt see Euripides  
 Clearer than mortal sense perceived the man ! 60

A sunset nearer Rhodes, by twelve hours' sweep  
 Of surge secured from horror ? Rather say,  
 Quieted out of weakness into strength.  
 I dare invite, survey the scene my sense  
 Staggered to apprehend : for, disinvolved 65  
 From the mere outside anguish and contempt,  
 Slowly a justice centred in a doom  
 Reveals itself. Ay, pride succumbed to pride,  
 Oppression met the oppressor and was matched.  
 Athenai's vaunt braved Sparté's violence 70  
 Till, in the shock, prone fell Peiraios, low  
 Rampart and bulwark lay, as,—timing stroke  
 Of hammer, axe, and beam hoist, poised and  
 swung,—

The very flute-girls blew their laughing best,  
 In dance about the conqueror while he bade 75  
 Music and merriment help enginery  
 Batter down, break to pieces all the trust  
 Of citizens once, slaves now. See what walls  
 Play substitute for the long double range  
 Themistoklean, heralding a guest 80  
 From harbour on to citadel ! Each side  
 Their senseless walls demolished stone by stone,  
 See,—outer wall as stonelike,—heads and hearts,—  
 Athenai's terror-stricken populace !  
 Prattlers, tongue-tied in crouching abjectness,— 85  
 Braggarts, who wring hands wont to flourish  
 swords—

Sophist and rhetorician, demagogue,  
 (Argument dumb, authority a jest)  
 Dikast and heliast, pleader, litigant,



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Quack-priest, sham-prophecy-retailer, scout 90  
 O' the customs, sycophant, whate'er the style,  
 Altar-scrap-snatcher, pimp and parasite,—  
 Rivalities at truce now each with each,  
 Stupefied mud-banks,—such an use they serve !  
 While the one order which performs exact 95  
 To promise, functions faithful last as first,  
 What is it but the city's lyric troop,  
 Chantress and psaltress, flute-girl, dancing-girl ?  
 Athenai's harlotry takes laughing care  
 Their patron miss no pipings, late she loved, 100  
 But deathward tread at least the kordax-step.

Die then, who pulled such glory on your heads !  
 There let it grind to powder ! Perikles !  
 The living are the dead now : death be life !  
 Why should the sunset yonder waste its wealth ? 105  
 Prove thee Olympian ! If my heart supply  
 Inviolatè the structure,—true to type,  
 Build me some spirit-place no flesh shall find,  
 As Pheidias may inspire thee : slab on slab,  
 Renew Athenai, quarry out the cloud, 110  
 Convert to gold yon west extravagance !  
 'Neath Propulaia, from Akropolis  
 By vapoury grade and grade, gold all the way,  
 Step to thy snow-Pnux, mount thy Bema-cloud,  
 Thunder and lighten thence a Hellas through 115  
 That shall be better and more beautiful  
 And too august for Sparté's foot to spurn !  
 Chasmed in the crag, again our Theatre  
 Predominates, one purple : Staghunt-month,  
 Brings it not Dionusia ? Hail, the Three ! 120  
 Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides  
 Compete, gain prize or lose prize, godlike still.  
 Nay, lest they lack the old god-exercise—  
 Their noble want the unworthy,—as of old,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

(How otherwise should patience crown their  
 might?) 125

What if each find his ape promoted man,  
 His censor raised for antic service still?  
 Some new Hermippos to pelt Perikles,  
 Kratinos to swear Pheidias robbed a shrine,  
 Eruxis—I suspect, Euripides, 130

No brow will ache because with mop and mow  
 He gibes my poet! There 's a dog-faced dwarf  
 That gets to godship somehow, yet retains  
 His apehood in the Egyptian hierarchy,  
 More decent, indecorous just enough: 135

Why should not dog-ape, graced in due degree,  
 Grow Momos as thou Zeus? Or didst thou sigh  
 Rightly with thy Makaria? “After life,  
 Better no sentiency than turbulence;  
 Death cures the low contention.” Be it so! 140

Yet progress means contention, to my mind.  
 Euthukles, who, except for love that speaks,  
 Art silent by my side while words of mine  
 Provoke that foe from which escape is vain  
 Henceforward, wake Athenai's fate and fall,— 145

Memories asleep as, at the altar-foot  
 Those Furies in the Oresteian song,—  
 Do I amiss who, wanting strength, use craft,  
 Advance upon the foe I cannot fly,  
 Nor feign a snake is dormant though it gnaw? 150

That fate and fall, once bedded in our brain,  
 Roots itself past upwrenching; but coaxed  
 forth,  
 Encouraged out to practise fork and fang,—  
 Perhaps, when satiate with prompt sustenance,  
 It may pine, likelier die than if left swell 155

In peace by our pretension to ignore,  
 Or pricked to threefold fury, should our stamp  
 Bruise and not brain the pest.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

A middle course!

What hinders that we treat this tragic theme  
As the Three taught when either woke some woe, 160  
—How Klutaimnestra hated, what the pride  
Of Iokasté, why Medeia clove  
Nature asunder. Small rebuked by large,  
We felt our puny hates refine to air,  
Our poor prides sink, prevent the humbling hand, 165  
Our petty passions purify their tide.  
So, Euthukles, permit the tragedy  
To re-enact itself, this voyage through,  
Till sunsets end and sunrise brighten Rhodes!  
Majestic on the stage of memory, 170  
Peplosed and kothorned, let Athenai fall  
Once more, nay, oft again till life conclude,  
Lent for the lesson: Choros, I and thou!  
What else in life seems piteous any more  
After such pity, or proves terrible 175  
Beside such terror?

Still—since Phrunichos  
Offended, by too premature a touch  
Of that Milesian smart-place freshly frayed—  
(Ah, my poor people, whose prompt remedy  
Was—fine the poet, not reform thyself!) 180  
Beware precipitate approach! Rehearse  
Rather the prologue, well a year away,  
Than the main misery, a sunset old.  
What else but fitting prologue to the piece  
Style an adventure, stranger than my first 185  
By so much as the issue it enwombed  
Lurked big beyond Balaustion's littleness?  
Second supreme adventure! O that Spring,  
That eve I told the earlier to my friends!  
Where are the four now, with each red-ripe mouth 190  
Crumpled so close, no quickest breath it fetched

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Could disengage the lip-flower furred to bud  
 For fear Admetos,—shivering head and foot,  
 As with sick soul and blind averted face  
 He trusted hand forth to obey his friend,— 195  
 Should find no wife in her cold hand's response,  
 Nor see the disenshrouded statue start  
 Alkestis, live the life and love the love !  
 I wonder, does the streamlet ripple still,  
 Outsmoothing galingale and watermint 200  
 Its mat-floor? while atbrim, 'twixtsedge and sedge,  
 What bubblings past Baccheion, broadened much,  
 Pricked by the reed and fretted by the fly,  
 Oared by the boatman-spider's pair of arms !  
 Lenaia was a gladsome month ago— 205  
 Euripides had taught "Andromédé :"  
 Next month, would teach "Kresphontes"—which  
     same month  
 Someone from Phokis, who companioned me  
 Since all that happened on those temple-steps,  
 Would marry me and turn Athenian too. 210  
 Now ! if next year the masters let the slaves  
 Do Bacchic service and restore mankind  
 That trilogy whereof, 't is noised, one play  
 Presents the Bacchai,—no Euripides  
 Will teach the choros, nor shall we be tinged 215  
 By any such grand sunset of his soul,  
 Exiles from dead Athenai,—not the live  
 That 's in the cloud there with the new-born star !

Speak to the infinite intelligence,  
 Sing to the everlasting sympathy ! 220  
 Winds belly sail, and drench of dancing brine  
 Buffet our boat-side, so the prore bound free !  
 Condense our voyage into one great day  
 Made up of sunset-closes : eve by eve,  
 Resume that memorable night-discourse 225

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

When,—like some meteor brilliance, fire and filth,  
Or say, his own Amphytheos, deity  
And dung, who, bound on the gods' embassy,  
Got men's acknowledgment in kick and cuff—  
We made acquaintance with a visitor 230  
Ominous, apparitional, who went  
Strange as he came, but shall not pass away.  
Let us attempt that memorable talk,  
Clothe the adventure's every incident  
With due expression : may not looks be told, 235  
Gesture made speak, and speech so amplified  
That words find blood-warmth which, cold-writ,  
they lose?

Recall the night we heard the news from Thrace,  
One year ago, Athenai still herself.

We two were sitting silent in the house, 240  
Yet cheerless hardly. Euthukles, forgive !  
I somehow speak to unseen auditors.  
Not *you*, but—Euthukles had entered, grave,  
Grand, may I say, as who brings laurel-branch  
And message from the tripod : such it proved. 245

He first removed the garland from his brow,  
Then took my hand and looked into my face.

“Speak good words !” much misgiving faltered I.

“Good words, the best, Balaustion ! He is crowned,  
Gone with his Attic ivy home to feast, 250  
Since Aischulos required companionship.  
Pour a libation for Euripides !”

When we had sat the heavier silence out—  
“Dead and triumphant still !” began reply

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

To my eye's question. "As he willed he worked : 255  
 And, as he worked, he wanted not, be sure,  
 Triumph his whole life through, submitting work  
 To work's right judges, never to the wrong—  
 To competency, not ineptitude.

When he had run life's proper race and worked 260  
 Quite to the stade's end, there remained to try  
 The stade's turn, should strength dare the double  
 course.

Half the diaulos reached, the hundred plays  
 Accomplished, force in its rebound sufficed  
 To lift along the athlete and ensure 265  
 A second wreath, proposed by fools for first,  
 The statist's olive as the poet's bay.

Wiselier, he suffered not a twofold aim  
 Retard his pace, confuse his sight, at once  
 Poet and statist ; though the multitude 270  
 Girded him ever 'All thine aim thine art ?

The idle poet only ? No regard  
 For civic duty, public service, here ?  
 We drop our ballot-bean for Sophokles !  
 Not only could he write "Antigoné," 275

But—since (we argued) whoso penned that piece  
 Might just as well conduct a squadron,—straight  
 Good-naturedly he took on him command,  
 Got laughed at, and went back to making plays,  
 Having allowed us our experiment 280  
 Respecting the fit use of faculty.'

No whit the more did athlete slacken pace.  
 Soon the jeers grew : 'Cold hater of his kind,  
 A sea-cave suits him, not the vulgar hearth !  
 What need of tongue-talk, with a bookish store 285  
 Would stock ten cities ?' Shadow of an ass !  
 No whit the worse did athlete touch the mark  
 And, at the turning-point, consign his scorn  
 O' the scorers to that final trilogy

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

'Hupsipulé,' 'Phoinissai,' and the Match 290  
 Of Life Contemplative with Active Life,  
 Zethos against Amphion. Ended so?  
 Nowise!—began again; for heroes rest  
 Dropping shield's oval o'er the entire man,  
 And he who thus took Contemplation's prize 295  
 Turned stade-point but to face Activity.  
 Out of all shadowy hands extending help  
 For life's decline pledged to youth's labour still,  
 Whatever renovation flatter age,—  
 Society with pastime, solitude 300  
 With peace,—he chose the hand that gave the heart,  
 Bade Macedonian Archelaos take  
 The leavings of Athenai, ash once flame.  
 For fifty politicians' frosty work,  
 One poet's ash proved ample and to spare : 305  
 He propped the state and filled the treasury,  
 Counsell'd the king as might a meaner soul,  
 Furnished the friend with what shall stand in stead  
 Of crown and sceptre, star his name about  
 When these are dust; for him, Euripides 310  
 Last the old hand on the old phorminx flung,  
 Clashed thence 'Alkaion,' maddened 'Pentheus' up;  
 Then music sighed itself away, one moan  
 Iphigeneia made by Aulis' strand;  
 With her and music died Euripides. 315

"The poet-friend who followed him to Thrace,  
 Agathon, writes thus much: the merchant-ship  
 Moreover brings a message from the king  
 To young Euripides, who went on board  
 This morning at Mounuchia: all is true." 320

I said "Thank Zeus for the great news and good!"

"Nay, the report is running in brief fire  
 Through the town's stubbly furrow," he resumed:

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

—“Entertains brightly what their favourite styles  
 ‘The City of Gapers’ for a week perhaps, 325  
 Supplants three luminous tales, but yesterday  
 Pronounced sufficient lamps to last the month :  
 How Glauketes, outbidding Morsimos,  
 Paid market-price for one Kopaic eel  
 A thousand drachmai, and then cooked his prize 330  
 Not proper conger-fashion but in oil  
 And nettles, as man fries the foam-fish-kind ;  
 How all the captains of the triremes, late  
 Victors at Arginousai, on return  
 Will, for reward, be straightway put to death ; 335  
 How Mikon wagered a Thessalian mime,  
 Trained him by Lais, looked on as complete,  
 Against Leogoras’ blood-mare koppa-marked,  
 Valued six talents,—swore, accomplished so,  
 The girl could swallow at a draught, nor breathe, 340  
 A choinix of unmixed Mendesian wine ;  
 And having lost the match will—dine on herbs !  
 Three stories late a-flame, at once extinct,  
 Outblazed by just ‘Euripides is dead’ !

“I met the concourse from the Theatre, 345  
 The audience flocking homeward : victory  
 Again awarded Aristophanes  
 Precisely for his old play chopped and changed  
 ‘The Female Celebrators of the Feast’—  
 That Thesmophoria, tried a second time. 350  
 ‘Never such full success !’—assured the folk,  
 Who yet stopped praising to have word of mouth  
 With ‘Euthukles, the bard’s own intimate,  
 Balaustion’s husband, the right man to ask.’

““Dead, yes, but how dead, may acquaintance  
 know ? 355  
 You were the couple constant at his cave :



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Tell us now, is it true that women, moved  
By reason of his liking Krateros . . .'

"I answered 'He was loved by Sokrates.'

" 'Nay,' said another, 'envy did the work ! 360  
For, emulating poets of the place,  
One Arridaïos, one Krateues, both  
Established in the royal favour, these . . .'

"Protagoras instructed him," said I.

" '*Phu*,' whistled Comic Platon, 'hear the fact ! 365  
'T was well said of your friend by Sophokles  
'He hate our women ? In his verse, belike :  
But when it comes to prose-work,—ha, ha, ha !'  
New climes don't change old manners : so, it  
chanced,

Pursuing an intrigue one moonless night 370  
With Arethousian Nikodikos' wife,  
(Come now, his years were simply seventy-five)  
Crossing the palace-court, what haps he on  
But Archelaos' pack of hungry hounds ?  
Who tore him piecemeal ere his cry brought help.' 375

"I asked : Did not you write 'The Festivals' ?  
You best know what dog tore him when alive.  
You others, who now make a ring to hear,  
Have not you just enjoyed a second treat,  
Proclaimed that ne'er was play more worthy prize 380  
Than this, myself assisted at, last year,  
And gave its worth to,—spitting on the same ?  
Appraise no poetry,—price cuttlefish,  
Or that seaweed-alphestes, scorpion-sort,  
Much famed for mixing mud with fantasy 385  
On midnights ! I interpret no foul dreams."

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

If so said Euthukles, so could not I,  
Balaustion, say. After "Lusistraté"  
No more for me of "people's privilege,"  
No witnessing "the Grand old Comedy" 390  
Coëval with our freedom, which, curtailed,  
Were freedom's deathblow : relic of the past,  
When Virtue laughingly told truth to Vice,  
Uncensured, since the stern mouth, stuffed with  
flowers,  
Through poetry breathed satire, perfumed blast 395  
Which sense snuffed up while searched unto the  
bone ! "

I was a stranger : "For first joy," urged friends,  
"Go hear our Comedy, some patriot piece  
That plies the selfish advocates of war  
With argument so unevadable 400  
That crash fall Kleons whom the finer play  
Of reason, tickling, deeper wounds no whit  
Than would a spear-thrust from a savory-stalk !  
No : you hear knave and fool told crime and fault,  
And see each scourged his quantity of stripes. 405  
'Rough dealing, awkward language,' whine our  
fops :

The world's too squeamish now to bear plain words  
Concerning deeds it acts with gust enough :  
But, thanks to wine-lees and democracy,  
We 've still our stage where truth calls spade a  
spade ! 410

Ashamed ? Phuromachos' decree provides  
The sex may sit discreetly, witness all,  
Sorted, the good with good, the gay with gay,  
Themselves unseen, no need to force a blush.  
A Rhodian wife and ignorant so long ? 415  
Go hear next play ! "

I heard "Lusistraté."  
Waves, said to wash pollution from the world,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Take that plague-memory, cure that pustule caught  
As, past escape, I sat and saw the piece  
By one appalled at Phaidra's fate,—the chaste, 420  
Whom, because chaste, the wicked goddess chained  
To that same serpent of unchastity  
She loathed most, and who, coiled so, died distraught  
Rather than make submission, loose one limb  
Love-wards, at lambency of honeyed tongue, 425  
Or torture of the scales which scraped her snow  
—I say, the piece by him who charged this piece  
(Because Euripides shrank not to teach,  
If gods be strong and wicked, man, though weak,  
May prove their match by willing to be good) 430  
With infamies the Scythian's whip should cure—  
“Such outrage done the public—Phaidra named!  
Such purpose to corrupt ingenuous youth,  
Such insult cast on female character!”—  
Why, when I saw that bestiality— 435  
So beyond all brute-beast imagining,  
That when, to point the moral at the close,  
Poor Salabaccho, just to show how fair  
Was “Reconciliation,” stripped her charms,  
That exhibition simply bade us breathe, 440  
Seemed something healthy and commendable  
After obscenity grotesqued so much  
It slunk away revolted at itself.  
Henceforth I had my answer when our sage  
Pattern-proposing seniors pleaded grave 445  
“You fail to fathom here the deep design!  
All 's acted in the interest of truth,  
Religion, and those manners old and dear  
Which made our city great when citizens  
Like Aristeides and like Miltiades 450  
Wore each a golden tettix in his hair.”  
What do they wear now under—Kleophon?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Well, for such reasons,—I am out of breath,  
 But loathsomeness we needs must hurry past,—  
 I did not go to see, nor then nor now, 455  
 The “Thesmophoriazousai.” But, since males  
 Choose to brave first, blame afterward, nor brand  
 Without fair taste of what they stigmatize,  
 Euthukles had not missed the first display,  
 Original portrait of Euripides 460  
 By “Virtue laughingly reproving Vice” :  
 “Virtue,”—the author, Aristophanes,  
 Who mixed an image out of his own depths,  
 Ticketed as I tell you. Oh, this time  
 No more pretension to recondite worth ! 465  
 No joke in aid of Peace, no demagogue  
 Pun-pelleted from Pnux, no kordax-dance  
 Overt helped covertly the Ancient Faith !  
 All now was muck, home-produce, honestman  
 The author's soul secreted to a play 470  
 Which gained the prize that day we heard the death.

I thought “How thoroughly death alters things !  
 Where is the wrong now, done our dead and great ?  
 How natural seems grandeur in relief,  
 Cliff-base with frothy spites against its calm !” 475

Euthukles interposed—he read my thought—

“O'er them, too, in a moment came the change.  
 The crowd's enthusiastic, to a man :  
 Since, rake as such may please the ordure-heap  
 Because of certain sparkles presumed ore, 480  
 At first flash of true lightning overhead,  
 They look up, nor resume their search too soon.  
 The insect-scattering sign is evident,  
 And nowhere winks a fire-fly rival now,  
 Nor bustles any beetle of the brood 485  
 With trundled dung-ball meant to menace heaven.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Contrariwise, the cry is 'Honour him !'  
'A statue in the theatre !' wants one ;  
Another 'Bring the poet's body back,  
Bury him in Peiraios : o'er his tomb 490  
Let Alkamenes carve the music-witch,  
The songstress-seiren, meed of melody :  
Thoukudides invent his epitaph !'  
To-night the whole town pays its tribute thus."

Our tribute should not be the same, my friend ! 495  
Statue ? Within our heart he stood, he stands !  
As for the vest outgrown now by the form,  
Low flesh that clothed high soul,—a vesture's fate—  
Why, let it fade, mix with the elements  
There where it, falling, freed Euripides ! 500  
But for the soul that 's tutelary now  
Till time end, o'er the world to teach and bless—  
How better hail its freedom than by first  
Singing, we two, its own song back again,  
Up to that face from which flowed beauty—face 505  
Now abler to see triumph and take love  
Than when it glorified Athenai once ?

The sweet and strange Alkestis, which saved me,  
Secured me—you, ends nowise, to my mind,  
In pardon of Admetos. Hearts are fain 510  
To follow cheerful weary Herakles  
Striding away from the huge gratitude,  
Club shouldered, lion-fleece round loin and flank,  
Bound on the next new labour "height o'er height  
Ever surmounting,—destiny's decree !" 515  
Thither He helps us : that 's the story's end ;  
He smiling said so, when I told him mine—  
My great adventure, how Alkestis helped.  
Afterward, when the time for parting fell,  
He gave me, with two other precious gifts, 520

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

This third and best, consummating the grace,  
"Herakles," writ by his own hand, each line.

"If it have worth, reward is still to seek.  
Somebody, I forget who, gained the prize  
And proved arch-poet: time must show!" he  
smiled:

525

"Take this, and, when the noise tires out, judge  
me—

Some day, not slow to dawn, when somebody—  
Who? I forget—proves nobody at all!"

Is not that day come? What if you and I  
Re-sing the song, inaugurate the fame?  
We have not waited to acquaint ourselves  
With song and subject; we can prologuize  
How, at Eurustheus' bidding,—hate strained  
hard,—

530

Herakles had departed, one time more,  
On his last labour, worst of all the twelve;  
Descended into Haides, thence to drag  
The triple-headed hound, which sun should see  
Spite of the god whose darkness whelped the Fear.  
Down went the hero, "back—how should he  
come?"

535

So laughed King Lukos, an old enemy,  
Who judged that absence testified defeat  
Of the land's loved one,—since he saved the land  
And for that service wedded Megara  
Daughter of Thebai, realm her child should rule.  
Ambition, greed and malice seized their prey,  
The Heracleian House, defenceless left,  
Father and wife and child, to trample out  
Trace of its hearth-fire: since extreme old age  
Wakes pity, woman's wrong wins championship,  
And child may grow up man and take revenge.

540

545

550

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Hence see we that, from out their palace-home  
 Hunted, for last resource they cluster now  
 Couched on the cold ground, hapless supplicants  
 About their courtyard altar,—Household Zeus  
 It is, the Three in funeral garb beseech, 555  
 Delaying death so, till deliverance come—  
 When did it ever?—from the deep and dark.  
 And thus breaks silence old Amphitruon's  
 voice. . . .

Say I not true thus far, my Euthukles?

Suddenly, torch-light! knocking at the door, 560  
 Loud, quick, "Admittance for the revels' lord!"  
 Some unintelligible Komos-cry—  
*Raw-flesh red, no cap upon his head,*  
*Dionusos, Bacchos, Phales, Iacchos,*  
*In let him reel with the kid-skin at his heel,* 565  
*Where it buries in the spread of the bushy myrtle-bed!*  
 (Our Rhodian Jackdaw-song was sense to that!)  
 Then laughter, outbursts ruder and more rude,  
 Through which, with silver point, a fluting pierced,  
 And ever "Open, open, Bacchos bids!" 570

But at last—one authoritative word,  
 One name of an immense significance:  
 For Euthukles rose up, threw wide the door.

There trooped the Choros of the Comedy  
 Crowned and triumphant; first, those flushed  
 Fifteen 575  
 Men that wore women's garb, grotesque disguise.  
 Then marched the Three,—who played Mnesi-  
 lochos,  
 Who, Toxotes, and who, robed right, masked rare,  
 Monkeyed our Great and Dead to heart's content  
 That morning in Athenai. Masks were down 580  
 And robes doffed now; the sole disguise was drink.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Mixing with these—I know not what gay crowd,  
 Girl-dancers, flute-boys, and pre-eminent  
 Among them,—doubtless draped with such reserve  
 As stopped fear of the fifty-drachma fine 585  
 (Beside one's name on public fig-tree nailed)  
 Which women pay who in the streets walk bare,—  
 Behold Elaphion of the Persic dance !  
 Who lately had frisked fawn-foot, and the rest,  
 —All for the Patriot Cause, the Antique Faith, 590  
 The Conservation of True Poesy—  
 Could I but penetrate the deep design !  
 Elaphion, more Peiraios-known as " Phaps,"  
 Tripped at the head of the whole banquet-band  
 Who came in front now, as the first fell back ; 595  
 And foremost—the authoritative voice,  
 The revels-leader, he who gained the prize,  
 And got the glory of the Archon's feast—  
 There stood in person Aristophanes.

And no ignoble presence ! On the bulge 600  
 Of the clear baldness,—all his head one brow,—  
 True, the veins swelled, blue network, and there  
 surged  
 A red from cheek to temple,—then retired  
 As if the dark-leaved chaplet damped a flame,—  
 Was never nursed by temperance or health. 605  
 But huge the eyeballs rolled back native fire,  
 Imperiously triumphant : nostrils wide  
 Waited their incense ; while the pursed mouth'spout  
 Aggressive, while the beak supreme above,  
 While the head, face, nay, pillared throat thrown  
 back, 610  
 Beard whitening under like a vinous foam,  
 These made a glory, of such insolence—  
 I thought,—such domineering deity  
 Hephaistos might have carved to cut the brine



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

For his gay brother's prow, imbrue that path 615  
Which, purpling, recognized the conqueror.  
Impudent and majestic : drunk, perhaps,  
But that 's religion ; sense too plainly snuffed :  
Still, sensuality was grown a rite.

What I had disbelieved most proved most true. 620  
There was a mind here, mind a-wantoning  
At ease of undisputed mastery  
Over the body's brood, those appetites.  
Oh but he grasped them grandly, as the god  
His either struggling handful,—hurtless snakes 625  
Held deep down, strained hard off from side and  
side !

Mastery his, theirs simply servitude,  
So well could firm fist help intrepid eye.  
Fawning and fulsome, had they licked and hissed ?  
At mandate of one muscle, order reigned. 630  
They had been wreathing much familiar now  
About him on his entry ; but a squeeze  
Choked down the pests to place : their lord stood  
free.

Forward he stepped : I rose and fronted him.

“ Hail, house, the friendly to Euripides ! ” 635  
(So he began) “ Hail, each inhabitant !  
You, lady ? What, the Rhodian ? Form and face,  
Victory's self upsoaring to receive  
The poet ? Right they named you . . . some rich  
name,

Vowel-buds thorned about with consonants, 640  
Fragrant, felicitous, rose-glow enriched  
By the Isle's unguent : some diminished end  
In *ion*, Kallistion ? delicater still,  
Kubelion or Melittion,—or, suppose

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

(Less vulgar love than bee or violet) 645  
 Phibalion, for the mouth split red-fig-wise,  
 Korakinidion for the coal-black hair,  
 Nettareion, Phabion for the darlingness?  
 But no, it was some fruit-flower, Rhoidion . . . ha,  
 We near the balsam-bloom—Balaustion! Thanks, 650  
 Rhodes! Folk have called me Rhodian, do you  
 know?  
 Not fools so far! Because, if Helios wived,  
 As Pindaros sings somewhere prettily,  
 Here blooms his offspring, earth-flesh with sun-  
 fire,  
 Rhodes' blood and Helios' gold. My phorminx,  
 boy! 655  
 Why does the boy hang back and baulk an ode  
 Tiptoe at spread of wing? But like enough,  
 Sunshinefraystorchlight. Witnesswhomyouscare,  
 Superb Balaustion! Look outside the house!  
*Pho*, you have quenched my Komos by first frown, 660  
 Struck dead all joyance: not a fluting puffs  
 From idle cheekband! Ah, my Choros too?  
 You've eaten cuckoo-apple! Dumb, you dogs?  
 So much good Thasian wasted on your throats  
 And out of them not one *Threttanelo*? 665  
*Neblaretai*! Because this earth-and-sun  
 Product looks wormwood and all bitter herbs?  
 Well, do I blench, though me she hates the most  
 Of mortals? By the cabbage, off they slink!  
 You, too, my Chrusomelolonthion-Phaps, 670  
 Girl-goldling-beetle-beauty? You, abashed,  
 Who late, supremely unabashable,  
 Propped up my play at that important point  
 When Artamouxia tricks the Toxotes?  
 Ha, ha,—thank Hermes for the lucky throw,— 675  
 We came last comedy of the whole seven,  
 So went all fresh to judgment well-disposed

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

For who should fatly feast them, eye and ear,  
 We two between us ! What, you fail your friend ?  
 Away then, free me of your cowardice ! 680  
 Go, get you the goat's breakfast ! Fare afield,  
 Ye circumcised of Egypt, pigs to sow,  
 Back to the Priest's or forward to the crows,  
 So you but rid me of such company !  
 Once left alone, I can protect myself 685  
 From statuesque Balaustion pedestalled  
 On much disapprobation and mistake !  
 She dares not beat the sacred brow, beside !  
 Bacchos' equipment, ivy safeguards well  
 As Phoibos' bay.

“ They take me at my word ! 690

One comfort is, I shall not want them long,  
 The Archon's cry creaks, creaks, ‘Curtail expense !’  
 The war wants money, year the twenty-sixth !  
 Cut down our Choros number, clip costume,  
 Save birds' wings, beetles' armour, spend the cash 695  
 In three-crest skull-caps, three days' salt-fish-slice,  
 Three-banked-ships for these sham-ambassadors,  
 And what not : any cost but Comedy's !  
 ‘No Choros’—soon will follow ; what care I ?  
 Archinos and Agurhios, scrape your flint, 700  
 Flay your dead dog, and curry favour so !  
 Choros in rags, with loss of leather next,  
 We lose the boys' vote, lose the song and dance,  
 Lose my Elaphion ! Still, the actor stays.  
 Save but my acting, and the baldhead bard 705  
 Kudathenaian and Pandionid,  
 Son of Philippos, Aristophanes  
 Surmounts his rivals now as heretofore,  
 Though stinted to mere sober prosy verse—  
 ‘Manners and men,’ so squeamish gets the world ! 710  
 No more ‘Step forward, strip for anapæsts !’

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

No calling naughty people by their names,  
No tickling audience into gratitude  
With chickpease, barleygroats and nuts and plums,  
No setting Salabaccho . . .”

As I turned— 715

“True, lady, I am tolerably drunk :  
The proper inspiration ! Otherwise,—  
Phrunichos, Choirilos !—had Aischulos  
So foiled you at the goat-song ? Drink 's a god.  
How else did that old doating driveller 720  
Kratinos foil me, match my masterpiece  
The ‘Clouds’ ? I swallowed cloud-distilment—  
dew

Undimmed by any grape-blush, knit my brow  
And gnawed my style and laughed my learnedest ;  
While he worked at his ‘Willow-wicker-flask,’ 725  
Swigging at that same flask by which he swore,  
Till, sing and empty, sing and fill again,  
Somehow result was—what it should not be  
Next time, I promised him and kept my word !  
Hence, brimful now of Thasian . . . I'll be bound, 730  
Mendesian, merely : triumph-night, you know,  
The High Priest entertains the conqueror,  
And, since war worsens all things, stingily  
The rascal starves whom he is bound to stuff,  
Choros and actors and their lord and king 735  
The poet ; supper, still he needs must spread—  
And this time all was conscientious fare :  
He knew his man, his match, his master—made  
Amends, spared neither fish, flesh, fowl nor wine :  
So merriment increased, I promise you, 740  
Till—something happened.”

Here he strangely paused.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

“After that,—well, it either was the cup  
To the Good Genius, our concluding pledge,  
That wrought me mischief, decently unmixed,—  
Or, what if, when *that* happened, need arose 745  
Of new libation? Did you only know  
What happened! Little wonder I am drunk.”

Euthukles, o'er the boat-side, quick, what change,  
Watch, in the water! But a second since,  
It laughed a ripply spread of sun and sea, 750  
Ray fused with wave, to never disunite.  
Now, sudden all the surface, hard and black,  
Lies a quenched light, dead motion: what the  
cause?

Look up and lo, the menace of a cloud  
Has solemnized the sparkling, spoiled the sport! 755  
Just so, some overshadow, some new care  
Stopped all the mirth and mocking on his face  
And left there only such a dark surmise  
—No wonder if the revel disappeared,  
So did his face shed silence every side! 760  
I recognized a new man fronting me.

“So!” he smiled, piercing to my thought at once,  
“You see myself? Balaustion's fixed regard  
Can strip the proper Aristophanes  
Of what our sophists, in their jargon, style 765  
His accidents? My soul sped forth but now  
To meet your hostile survey,—soul unseen,  
Yet veritably cinct for soul-defence  
With satyr sportive quips, cranks, boss and spike,  
Just as my visible body paced the street, 770  
Environed by a boon companionship  
Your apparition also puts to flight.  
Well, what care I if, unaccounted twice,  
I front my foe—no comicality

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Round soul, and body-guard in banishment? 775  
 Thank your eyes' searching, undisguised I stand :  
 The merest female child may question me.  
 Spare not, speak bold, Balaustion !”

I did speak :

“ Bold speech be—welcome to this honoured  
 hearth,  
 Good Genius ! Glory of the poet, glow 780  
 O' the humourist who castigates his kind,  
 Suave summer-lightning lambency which plays  
 On stag-horned tree, misshapen crag askew,  
 Then vanishes with unvindictive smile  
 After a moment's laying black earth bare. 785  
 Splendour of wit that springs a thunderball—  
 Satire—to burn and purify the world,  
 True aim, fair purpose : just wit justly strikes  
 Injustice,—right, as rightly quells the wrong,  
 Finds out in knaves', fools', cowards' armoury 790  
 The tricky tinselled place fire flashes through,  
 No damage else, sagacious of true ore ;  
 Wit, learned in the laurel, leaves each wreath  
 O'er lyric shell or tragic barbiton,—  
 Though alien gauds be singed,—undesecrate, 795  
 The genuine solace of the sacred brow.  
 Ay, and how pulses flame a patriot-star  
 Steadfast athwart our country's night of things,  
 To beacon, would she trust no meteor-blaze,  
 Athenai from the rock she steers for straight ! 800  
 O light, light, light, I hail light everywhere,  
 No matter for the murk that was,—perchance,  
 That will be,—certes, never should have been  
 Such orb's associate !

“ Aristophanes !  
 ‘ The merest female child may question you ? ’ 805

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Once, in my Rhodes, a portent of the wave  
Appalled our coast : for many a darkened day,  
Intolerable mystery and fear.  
Who snatched a furtive glance through crannied  
peak,  
Could but report of snake-scale, lizard-limb,— 810  
So swam what, making whirlpools as it went,  
Madded the brine with wrath or monstrous sport.  
'T is Tuphon, loose, unmanacled from mount,  
Declared the priests, 'no way appeasable  
Unless perchance by virgin sacrifice !' 815  
Thus grew the terror and o'erhung the doom—  
Until one eve a certain female-child  
Strayed in safe ignorance to seacoast edge,  
And there sat down and sang to please herself.  
When all at once, large-looming from his wave, 820  
Out leaned, chin hand-propped, pensive on the  
ledge,  
A sea-worn face, sad as mortality,  
Divine with yearning after fellowship.  
He rose but breast-high. So much god she saw ;  
So much she sees now, and does reverence !" 825

Ah, but there followed tail-splash, frisk of fin !  
Let cloud pass, the sea's ready laugh outbreaks.  
No very godlike trace retained the mouth  
Which mocked with—

"So, He taught you tragedy !  
I always asked 'Why may not women act ?' 830  
Nay, wear the comic visor just as well ;  
Or, better, quite cast off the face-disguise  
And voice-distortion, simply look and speak,  
Real women playing women as men—men !  
I shall not wonder if things come to that, 835  
Some day when I am distant far enough.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Do you conceive the quite new Comedy  
 When laws allow ? laws only let girls dance,  
 Pipe, posture,—above all, Elaphionize,  
 Provided they keep decent—that is, dumb. 840  
 Ay, and, conceiving, I would execute,  
 Had I but two lives : one were overworked !  
 How penetrate encrusted prejudice,  
 Pierce ignorance three generations thick  
 Since first Sousarion crossed our boundary ? 845  
 He battered with a big Megaric stone ;  
 Chionides felled oak and rough-hewed thence  
 This club I wield now, having spent my life  
 In planing knobs and sticking studs to shine ;  
 Somebody else must try mere polished steel !” 850

Emboldened by the sober mood's return,  
 “Meanwhile,” said I, “since planed and studded  
     club  
 Once more has pashed competitors to dust,  
 And poet proves triumphant with that play  
 Euthukles found last year unfortunate,— 855  
 Does triumph spring from smoothness still more  
     smoothed,  
 Fresh studs sown thick and threefold ? In plain  
     words,  
 Have you exchanged brute-blows,—which teach  
     the brute  
 Man may surpass him in brutality,—  
 For human fighting, or true god-like force 860  
 Which breathes persuasion nor needs fight at all ?  
 Have you essayed attacking ignorance,  
 Convicting folly, by their opposites,  
 Knowledge and wisdom ? not by yours for ours,  
 Fresh ignorance and folly, new for old, 865  
 Greater for less, your crime for our mistake !  
 If so success at last have crowned desert,



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Bringing surprise (dashed haply by concern  
At your discovery such wild waste of strength  
—And what strength!—went so long to keep in  
vogue 870

Such warfare—and what warfare!—shamed so fast,  
So soon made obsolete, as fell their foe  
By the first arrow native to the orb,  
First onslaught worthy Aristophanes)—  
Was this conviction's entry that same strange 875  
'Something that happened' to confound your feast?"

"Ah, did he witness then my play that failed,  
First 'Thesmophoriazousai'? Well and good!  
But did he also see,—your Euthukles,—  
My 'Grasshoppers' which followed and failed too, 880  
Three months since, at the 'Little-in-the-Fields'?"

"To say that he did see that First—should say  
He never cared to see its following."

"There happens to be reason why I wrote  
First play and second also. Ask the cause! 885  
I warrant you receive ere talk be done,  
Fit answer, authorizing either act.  
But here's the point: as Euthukles made vow  
Never again to taste my quality,  
So I was minded next experiment 890  
Should tickle palate—yea, of Euthukles!  
Not by such utter change, such absolute  
A topsyturvy of stage-habitude  
As you and he want,—Comedy built fresh,  
By novel brick and mortar, base to roof,— 895  
No, for I stand too near and look too close!  
Pleasure and pastime yours, spectators brave,  
Should I turn art's fixed fabric upside down!  
Little you guess how such tough work tasks soul!

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Not overtasks, though : give fit strength fair play, 900  
 And strength 's a demiourgos ! Art renewed ?  
 Ay, in some closet where strength shuts out—first  
 The friendly faces, sympathetic cheer :  
 ' More of the old provision none supplies  
 So bounteously as thou,—our love, our pride, 905  
 Our author of the many a perfect piece !  
 Stick to that standard, change were decadence !'  
 Next, the unfriendly : ' This time, strain will tire,  
 He 's fresh, Ameipsias thy antagonist !'  
 —Or better, in some Salaminian cave 910  
 Where sky and sea and solitude make earth  
 And man and noise one insignificance,  
 Let strength propose itself,—behind the world,—  
 Sole prize worth winning, work that satisfies  
 Strengthithasdared anddone strength'suttermost ! 915  
 After which,—clap-to closet and quit cave,—  
 Strength may conclude in Archelaos' court,  
 And yet esteem the silken company  
 So much sky-scud, sea-froth, earth-thistledown,  
 For aught their praise or blame should joy or  
 grieve. 920  
 Strength amid crowds as late in solitude  
 May lead the still life, ply the wordless task :  
 Then only, when seems need to move or speak,  
 Moving—for due respect, when statesmen pass,  
 (Strength, in the closet, watched how spiders spin) 925  
 Speaking—when fashion shows intelligence,  
 (Strength, in the cave, oft whistled to the gulls)  
 In short, has learnt first, practised afterwards !  
 Despise the world and reverence yourself,—  
 Why, you may unmake things and remake things, 930  
 And throw behind you, unconcerned enough,  
 What 's made or marred : 'you teach men, are not  
 taught !'  
 So marches off the stage Euripides !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

" No such thin fare feeds flesh and blood like mine,  
 No such faint fume of fancy sates my soul, 935  
 No such seclusion, closet, cave or court,  
 Suits either : give me Iostephanos  
 Worth making happy what coarse way she will—  
 O happy-maker, when her cries increase  
 About the favourite ! ' Aristophanes ! 940  
 More grist to mill, here 's Kleophon to grind !  
 He 's for refusing peace, though Sparté cede  
 Even Dekeleia ! Here 's Kleonumos  
 Declaring—though he threw away his shield,  
 He 'll thrash you till you lay your lyre aside ! 945  
 Orestes bids mind where you walk of nights—  
 He wants your cloak as you his cudgelling :  
 Here 's, finally, Melanthios fat with fish,  
 The gormandizer-spendthrift-dramatist !  
 So, bustle ! Pounce on opportunity ! 950  
 Let fun a-screaming in Parabasis,  
 Find food for folk agape at either end,  
 Mad for amusement ! Times grow better too,  
 And should they worsen, why, who laughs, forgets.  
 In no case, venture boy-experiments ! 955  
 Old wine 's the wine : new poetry drinks raw :  
 Two plays a season is your pledge, beside ;  
 So, give us 'Wasps' again, grown hornets now !'"

Then he changed.

" Do you so detect in me—  
 Brow-bald, chin-bearded, me, curved cheek, carved  
     lip, 960  
 Or where soul sits and reigns in either eye—  
 What suits the—stigma, I say,—style say you,  
 Of ' Wine-lees-poet ' ? Bravest of buffoons,  
 Less blunt than Telekleides, less obscene  
 Than Murtilos, Hermippos : quite a match 965  
 In elegance for Eupolis himself,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Yet pungent as Kratinos at his best ?  
 Graced with traditional immunity  
 Ever since, much about my grandsire's time,  
 Some funny village-man in Megara, 970  
 Lout-lord and clown-king, used a privilege,  
 As due religious drinking-bouts came round,  
 To daub his phyz,—no, that was afterward,—  
 He merely mounted cart with mates of choice  
 And traversed country, taking house by house, 975  
 At night,—because of danger in the freak,—  
 Then hollaed 'Skin-flint starves his labourers !  
 Clench-fist stows figs away, cheats government !  
 Such an one likes to kiss his neighbour's wife,  
 And beat his own ; while such another . . . Boh !' 980  
 Soon came the broad day, circumstantial tale,  
 Dancing and verse, and there 's our Comedy,  
 There 's Mullos, there 's Euetes, there 's the stock  
 I shall be proud to graft my powers upon !  
 Protected ? Punished quite as certainly 985  
 When Archons pleased to lay down each his law,—  
 Your Morucheides-Surakosios sort,—  
 Each season, 'No more naming citizens,  
 Only abuse the vice, the vicious spare !  
 Observe, henceforth no Areopagite 990  
 Demean his rank by writing Comedy !'  
 (Theyoneandallcouldwrite the 'Clouds' of course.)  
 'Needs must we nick expenditure, allow  
 Comedy half a choros, supper—none,  
 Times being hard, while applicants increase 995  
 For, what costs cash, the Tragic Trilogy.'  
 Lofty Tragedians ! How they lounge aloof  
 Each with his Triad, three plays to my one,  
 Not counting the contemptuous fourth, the frank  
 Concession to mere mortal levity, 1000  
 Satyric pittance tossed our beggar-world !  
 Your proud Euripides from first to last

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Doled out some five such, never deigned us more !  
 And these—what curds and whey for marrowy wine !  
 That same Alkestis you so rave about 1005  
 Passed muster with him for a Satyr-play,  
 The prig !—why trifle time with toys and skits  
 When he could stuff four ragbags sausage-wise  
 With sophistry, with bookish odds and ends,  
 Sokrates, meteors, moonshine, ' Life 's not Life,' 1010  
 ' The tongueswore, but unsworn the mind remains,'  
 And fifty such concoctions, crab-tree-fruit  
 Digested while, head low and heels in heaven,  
 He lay, let Comics laugh—for privilege !  
 Looked puzzled on, or pityingly off, 1015  
 But never dreamed of paying gibe by jeer,  
 Buffet by blow : plenty of proverb-pokes  
 At vice and folly, wicked kings, mad mobs !  
 No sign of wincing at my Comic lash,  
 No protest against infamous abuse, 1020  
 Malignant censure,—nought to prove I scourged  
 With tougher thong than leek-and-onion-plait !  
 If ever he glanced gloom, aggrieved at all,  
 The aggriever must be—Aischulos perhaps :  
 Or Sophokles he 'd take exception to. 1025  
 —Do you detect in me—in me, I ask,  
 The man like to accept this measurement  
 Of faculty, contentedly sit classed  
 Mere Comic Poet—since I wrote ' The Birds ' ? ”

I thought there might lurk truth in jest's disguise. 1030

“ Thanks ! ” he resumed, so quick to construe smile !  
 “ I answered—in my mind—these gapers thus :  
 Since old wine 's ripe and new verse raw, you judge—  
 What if I vary vintage-mode and mix  
 Blossom with must, give nosegay to the brew, 1035  
 Fining, refining, gently, surely, till

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The educated taste turns unawares  
 From customary dregs to draught divine?  
 Then answered—with my lips: More 'Wasps'  
     you want?  
 Come next year and I give you 'Grasshoppers'! 1040  
 And 'Grasshoppers' I gave them,—last month's  
     play.  
 They formed the Choros. Alkibiades,  
 No longer Triphales but Trilophos,  
 (Whom I called Darling-of-the-Summertime,  
 Born to be nothing else but beautiful 1045  
 And brave, to eat, drink, love his life away)  
 Persuades the Tettix (our Autochthon-brood,  
 That sip the dew and sing on olive-branch  
 Above the ant-and-emmet populace)  
 To summon all who meadow, hill and dale 1050  
 Inhabit—bee, wasp, woodlouse, dragonfly—  
 To band themselves against red nipper-nose  
 Stagbeetle, huge Taügetan (you guess—  
 Sparté) Athenai needs must battle with,  
 Because her sons are grown effeminate 1055  
 To that degree—so morbifies their flesh  
 The poison-drama of Euripides,  
 Morals and music—there 's no antidote  
 Occurs save warfare which inspirits blood,  
 And brings us back perchance the blessed time 1060  
 When (Choros takes up tale) our commonalty  
 Firm in primæval virtue, antique faith,  
 Ere earwig-sophist plagued or pismire-sage,  
 Cockered no noddle up with A, b, g,  
 Book-learning, logic-chopping, and the moon, 1065  
 But just employed their brains on '*Ruppapai*,  
 Row, boys, munch barley-bread, and take your  
     ease—  
 Mindful, however, of the tier beneath!  
 Ah, golden epoch! while the nobler sort

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

(Such needs must study, no contesting that !) 1070  
 Wore no long curls but used to crop their hair,  
 Gathered the tunic well about the ham,  
 Remembering 't was soft sand they used for seat  
 At school-time, while—mark this—the lesson long,  
 No learner ever dared to cross his legs ! 1075  
 Then, if you bade him take the myrtle-bough  
 And sing for supper—'t was some grave romaunt  
*How man of Mitulené, wondrous wise,*  
*Jumped into hedge, by mortals quickset called,*  
*And there, anticipating Oidipous,* 1080  
*Scratched out his eyes and scratched them in again.*  
 None of your Phaidras, Augés, Kanakés,  
 To mincing music, turn, trill, tweedle-trash,  
 Whence comes that Marathon is obsolete !  
 Next, my Antistrophé was—praise of Peace : 1085  
 Ah, could our people know what Peace implies !  
 Home to the farm and furrow ! Grub one's vine,  
 Romp with one's Thratta, pretty serving-girl,  
 When wifie 's busy bathing ! Eat and drink,  
 And drink and eat, what else is good in life ? 1090  
 Slice hare, toss pancake, gaily gurgle down  
 The Thasian grape in celebration due  
 Of Bacchos ! Welcome, dear domestic rite,  
 When wife and sons and daughters, Thratta too,  
 Pour peasoup as we chant delectably 1095  
*In Bacchos reels, his tunic at his heels !*  
 Enough, you comprehend,—I do at least !  
 Then,—be but patient,—the Parabasis !  
 Pray ! For in that I also pushed reform.  
 None of the self-laudation, vulgar brag, 1100  
 Vainglorious rivals cultivate so much !  
 No ! If some merest word in Art's defence  
 Justice demanded of me,—never fear !  
 Claim was preferred, but dignifiedly.  
 A cricket asked a locust (winged, you know) 1105

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

What he had seen most rare in foreign parts?  
 'I have flown far,' chirped he, 'North, East,  
     South, West,  
 And nowhere heard of poet worth a fig  
 If matched with Bald-head here, Aigina's boast,  
 Who in this play bids rivalry despair 1110  
 Past, present, and to come, so marvellous  
 His Tragic, Comic, Lyric excellence!  
 Whereof the fit reward were (not to speak  
 Of dinner every day at public cost  
 I' the Prutaneion) supper with yourselves, 1115  
 My Public, best dish offered bravest bard!  
 No more! no sort of sin against good taste!  
 Then, satire,—Oh, a plain necessity!  
 But I won't tell you: for—could I dispense  
 With one more gird at old Aripkrades? 1120  
 How scorpion-like he feeds on human flesh—  
 Ever finds out some novel infamy  
 Unutterable, inconceivable,  
 Which all the greater need was to describe  
 Minutely, each tail-twist at ink-shed time . . . 1125  
 Now, what 's your gesture caused by? What  
     you loathe,  
 Don't I loathe doubly, else why take such pains  
 To tell it you? But keep your prejudice!  
 My audience justified you! Housebreakers!  
 This pattern-purity was played and failed 1130  
 Last Rural Dionusia—failed! for why?  
 Ameipsias followed with the genuine stuff.  
 He had been mindful to engage the Four—  
 Karkinos and his dwarf-crab-family—  
 Father and sons, they whirled like spinning-tops, 1135  
 Choros gigantically poked his fun,  
 The boys' frank laugh relaxed the seniors' brow,  
 The skies re-echoed victory's acclaim,  
 Ameipsias gained his due, I got my dose



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Of wisdom for the future. Purity? 1140  
 No more of that next month, Athenai mine!  
 Contrive new cut of robe who will,—I patch  
 The old exomis, add no purple sleeve!  
 The Thesmophoriazousai, smartened up  
 With certain plaits, shall please, I promise you! 1145

“Yes, I took up the play that failed last year,  
 And re-arranged things; threw adroitly in,—  
 No Parachoregema,—men to match  
 My women there already; and when these  
 (I had a hit at Aristullos here, 1150  
 His plan how womankind should rule the roast)  
 Drove men to plough—‘A-field, ye cribbed of  
     cape!’  
 Men showed themselves exempt from service  
     straight  
 Stupendously, till all the boys cried ‘Brave!’  
 Then for the elders, I bethought me too, 1155  
 Improved upon Mnesilochos’ release  
 From the old bowman, board and binding-strap:  
 I made his son-in-law Euripides  
 Engage to put both shrewish wives away—  
 ‘Gravity’ one, the other ‘Sophist-lore’— 1160  
 And mate with the Bald Bard’s hetairai twain—  
 ‘Goodhumour’ and ‘Indulgence’: on they tripped,  
 Murrhiné, Akalanthis,—‘beautiful  
 Their whole belongings’—crowd joined choros  
     there!  
 And while the Toxotes wound up his part 1165  
 By shower of nuts and sweetmeats on the mob,  
 The woman-choros celebrated New  
 Kalligeneia, the frank last-day rite.  
 Brief, I was chairéd and caressed and crowned  
 And the whole theatre broke out a-roar, 1170  
 Echoed my admonition—choros-cap—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

*Rivals of mine, your hands to your faces !*  
*Summon no more the Muses, the Graces,*  
*Since here by my side they have chosen their places !*  
 And so we all flocked merrily to feast, 1175  
 I, my choragos, choros, actors, mutes  
 And flutes aforesaid, friends in crowd, no fear,  
 At the Priest's supper ; and hilarity  
 Grew none the less that, early in the piece,  
 Ran a report, from row to row close-packed, 1180  
 Of messenger's arrival at the Port  
 With weighty tidings, 'Of Lusandros' flight,'  
 Opined one ; 'That Eubolia penitent  
 Sends the Confederation fifty ships,'  
 Preferred another ; while 'The Great King's Eye 1185  
 Has brought a present for Elaphion here,  
 That rarest peacock Kompolakuthes !'  
 Such was the supposition of a third.  
 'No matter what the news,' friend Strattis laughed,  
 'It won't be worse for waiting : while each click 1190  
 Of the klepsudra sets a-shaking grave  
 Resentment in our shark's-head, boiled and spoiled  
 By this time : dished in Sphettian vinegar,  
 Silphion and honey, served with cocks'-brain-sauce!  
 So, swift to supper, Poet ! No mistake, 1195  
 This play ; nor, like the unflavoured "Grass-  
     hoppers,"  
 Salt without thyme !' Right merrily we supped,  
 Till—something happened.

"Out it shall, at last !

"Mirth drew to ending, for the cup was crowned  
 To the Triumphant ! 'Kleonclapper erst, 1200  
 Now, Plier of a scourge Euripides  
 Fairly turns tail from, flying Attiké  
 For Makedonia's rocks and frosts and bears,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Where, furry grown, he growls to match the squeak  
 Of girl-voiced, crocus-vested Agathon ! 1205  
 Ha ha, he he !' When suddenly a knock—  
 Sharp, solitary, cold, authoritative.

" ' *Babaiax* ! Sokrates a-passing by,  
 A-peering in for Aristullos' sake,  
 To put a question touching Comic Law ?' 1210

" No ! Enters an old pale-swathed majesty,  
 Makes slow mute passage through two ranks as  
     mute,  
 (Strattis stood up with all the rest, the sneak !)  
 Grey brow still bent on ground, upraised at length  
 When, our Priest reached, full-front the vision  
     paused. 1215

" ' Priest !'—the deep tone succeeded the fixed  
     gaze—  
 ' Thou carest that thy god have spectacle  
 Decent and seemly ; wherefore I announce  
 That, since Euripides is dead to-day,  
 My Choros, at the Greater Feast, next month, 1220  
 Shall, clothed in black, appear ungarlanded !'

" Then the grey brow sank low, and Sophokles  
 Re-swathed him, sweeping doorward : mutely  
     passed  
 ' Twixt rows as mute, to mingle possibly  
 With certain gods who convoy age to port ; 1225  
 And night resumed him.

" When our stupor broke,  
 Chirpings took courage, and grew audible.

' Dead—so one speaks now of Euripides !  
 Ungarlanded dance Choros, did he say ?  
 I guess the reason : in extreme old age 1230

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

No doubt such have the gods for visitants.  
Why did he dedicate to Herakles  
An altar else, but that the god, turned Judge,  
Told him in dream who took the crown of gold?  
He who restored Akropolis the theft, 1235  
Himself may feel perhaps a timely twinge  
At thought of certain other crowns he filched  
From—who now visits Herakles the Judge.  
Instance "Medeia"! that play yielded palm  
To Sophokles; and he again—to whom? 1240  
Euphorion! Why? Ask Herakles the Judge!

'Ungarlanded, just means—economy!  
Suppress robes, chaplets, everything suppress  
Except the poet's present! An old tale  
Put capitably by Trugaios—eh? 1245  
—News from the world of transformation strange!  
How Sophokles is grown Simonides,  
And,—aged, rotten,—all the same, for greed  
Would venture on a hurdle out to sea!—  
So jokes Philonides. Kallistratos 1250  
Retorts—Mistake! Instead of stinginess,  
The fact is, in extreme decrepitude,  
He has discarded poet and turned priest,  
Priest of Half-Hero Alkon: visited  
In his own house too by Asklepios' self, 1255  
So he avers. Meanwhile, his own estate  
Lies fallow; Iophon's the manager,—  
Nay, touches up a play, brings out the same,  
Asserts true sonship. See to what you sink  
After your dozen-dozen prodigies! 1260  
Looking so old—Euripides seems young,  
Born ten years later.'

'Just his tricky style!  
Since, stealing first away, he wins first word  
Out of good-natured rival Sophokles,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Procures himself no bad panegyric. 1265  
Had fate willed otherwise, himself were taxed  
To pay survivor's-tribute,—harder squeezed  
From anybody beaten first to last,  
Than one who, steadily a conqueror,  
Finds that his magnanimity is tasked 1270  
To merely make pretence and—beat itself !'

“So chirped the feasters though suppressedly.

“But I—what else do you suppose?—had pierced  
Quite through friends' outside-straining, foes'  
mock-praise,  
And reached conviction hearted under all. 1275  
Death's rapid line had closed a life's account,  
And cut off, left unalterably clear  
The summed-up value of Euripides.

Well, it might be the Thasian ! Certainly  
There sang suggestive music in my ears ; 1280  
And, through—what sophists style—the wall of  
sense

My eyes pierced : death seemed life and life  
seemed death,

Envisaged that way, now, which I, before,  
Conceived was just a moonstruck mood. Quite  
plain

There re-insisted,—ay, each prim stiff phrase 1285  
Of each old play, my still-new laughing-stock,  
Had meaning, well worth poet's pains to state,  
Should life prove half true life's term,—death, the  
rest.

As for the other question, late so large  
Now all at once so little,—he or I, 1290  
Which better comprehended playwright craft,—  
There, too, old admonition took fresh point.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

As clear recurred our last word-interchange  
Two years since, when I tried with 'Ploutos.'  
'Vain!'

Saluted me the cold grave-bearded bard— 1295

'Vain, this late trial, Aristophanes!

None baulks the genius with impunity!

You know what kind 's the nobler, what makes  
grave

Or what makes grin; there 's yet a nobler still,  
Possibly,—what makes wise, not grave,—and glad, 1300

Not grinning: whereby laughter joins with tears,

Tragic and Comic Poet prove one power,

And Aristophanes becomes our Fourth—

Nay, greatest! Never needs the Art stand still,

But those Art leans on lag, and none like you, 1305

Her strongest of supports, whose step aside

Undoes the march: defection checks advance

Too late ventured! See the "Ploutos" here!

This step decides your foot from old to new—

Proves you relinquish song and dance and jest, 1310

Discard the beast, and, rising from all-fours,

Fain would paint, manlike, actual human life,

Make veritable men think, say and do.

Here 's the conception: which to execute,

Where 's force? Spent! Ere the race began, was  
breath 1315

O' the runner squandered on each friendly fool—

Wit-fireworks fizzed off while day craved no flame:

How should the night receive her due of fire

Flared out in Wasps and Horses, Clouds and

Birds,

Prodigiously a-crackle? Rest content! 1320

The new adventure for the novel man

Born to that next success myself foresee

In right of where I reach before I rest.

At end of a long course, straight all the way,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Well may there tremble somewhat into ken 1325  
 The untrod path, clouds veiled from earlier gaze !  
 Nonemay live two lives: I have lived mine through,  
 Die where I first stand still. You retrograde.  
 I leave my life's work. I compete with you,  
 My last with your last, my Antiope— 1330  
 Phoinissai—with this Ploutos? No, I think !  
 Ever shall great and awful Victory  
 Accompany my life—in Maketis  
 If not Athenai. Take my farewell, friend !  
 Friend,—for from no consummate excellence 1335  
 Like yours, whatever fault may countervail,  
 Do I profess estrangement : murk the marsh,  
 Yet where a solitary marble block  
 Blanches the gloom, there let the eagle perch !  
 You show—what splinters of Pentelikos, 1340  
 Islanded by what ordure ! Eagles fly,  
 Rest on the right place, thence depart as free ;  
 But 'ware man's footstep, would it traverse mire  
 Untainted ! Mire is safe for worms that crawl.'

"Balaustion ! Here are very many words, 1345  
 All to portray one moment's rush of thought,—  
 And much they do it ! Still, you understand.  
 The Archon, the Feast-master, read their sum  
 And substance, judged the banquet-glow extinct,  
 So rose, discreetly if abruptly, crowned 1350  
 The parting cup,—'To the Good Genius, then !'

"Up starts young Strattis for a final flash :  
 'Ay, the Good Genius ! To the Comic Muse,  
 She who evolves superiority,  
 Triumph and joy from sorrow, unsuccess 1355  
 And all that 's incomplete in human life ;  
 Who proves such actual failure transient wrong,  
 Since out of body uncouth, halt and maimed—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Since out of soul grotesque, corrupt or blank—  
 Fancy, uplifted by the Muse, can flit 1360  
 To soul and body, re-instate them Man :  
 Beside which perfect man, how clear we see  
 Divergency from type was earth's effect !  
 Escaping whence by laughter,—Fancy's feat,—  
 We right man's wrong, establish true for false,— 1365  
 Above misshapen body, uncouth soul,  
 Reach the fine form, the clear intelligence—  
 Above unseemliness, reach decent law,—  
 By laughter : attestation of the Muse  
 That low-and-ugsome is not signed and sealed 1370  
 Incontrovertibly man's portion here,  
 Or, if here,—why, still high-and-fair exists  
 In that ethereal realm where laughs our soul  
 Lift by the Muse. Hail thou her ministrant !  
 Hail who accepted no deformity 1375  
 In man as normal and remediless,  
 But rather pushed it to such gross extreme  
 That, outraged, we protest by eye's recoil  
 The opposite proves somewhere rule and law !  
 Hail who implied, by limning Lamachos, 1380  
 Plenty and pastime wait on peace, not war !  
 Philokleon—better bear a wrong than plead,  
 Play the litigious fool to stuff the mouth  
 Of dikast with the due three-obol fee !  
 The Paphlagonian—stick to the old sway 1385  
 Of few and wise, not rabble-government !  
 Trugaios, Pisthetairos, Strepsiades,—  
 Why multiply examples ? Hail, in fine,  
 The hero of each painted monster—so  
 Suggesting the unpictured perfect shape ! 1390  
 Pour out ! A laugh to Aristophanes !'

"Stay, my fine Strattis"—and I stopped applause—  
 "To the Good Genius—but the Tragic Muse !



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

She who instructs her poet, bids man's soul  
 Play man's part merely nor attempt the gods' 1395  
 Ill-guessed of ! Task humanity to height,  
 Put passion to prime use, urge will, unshamed  
 When will's last effort breaks in impotence !  
 No power forego, elude : no weakness,—plied  
 Fairly by power and will,—renounce, deny ! 1400  
 Acknowledge, in such miscalled weakness strength  
 Latent : and substitute thus things for words !  
 Make man run life's race fairly,—legs and feet,  
 Craving no false wings to o'erfly its length !  
 Trust on, trust ever, trust to end—in truth ! 1405  
 By truth of extreme passion, utmost will,  
 Shame back all false display of either force—  
 Barrier about such strenuous heat and glow,  
 That cowardice shall shirk contending,—cant,  
 Pretension, shrivel at truth's first approach ! 1410  
 Pour to the Tragic Muse's ministrant  
 Who, as he pictured pure Hippolutos,  
 Abolished our earth's blot Aripkrades ;  
 Who, as he drew Bellerophon the bold,  
 Proclaimed Kleonumos incredible ; 1415  
 Who, as his Theseus towered up man once more,  
 Made Alkibiades shrink boy again !  
 A tear—no woman's tribute, weak exchange  
 For action, water spent and heart's-blood saved—  
 No man's regret for greatness gone, ungraced 1420  
 Perchance by even that poor meed, man's praise—  
 But some god's superabundance of desire,  
 Yearning of will to 'scape necessity,—  
 Love's overbrimming for self-sacrifice,  
 Whence good might be, which never else may  
     be, 1425  
 By power displayed, forbidden this strait sphere,—  
 Effort expressible one only way—  
 Such tear from me fall to Euripides ! "

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The Thasian !—All, the Thasian, I account !  
Whereupon outburst the whole company 1430  
Into applause and—laughter, would you think ?

“The unrivalled one ! How, never at a loss,  
He turns the Tragic on its Comic side  
Else imperceptible ! Here 's death itself—  
Death of a rival, of an enemy,— 1435

Scarce seen as Comic till the master-touch  
Made it acknowledge Aristophanes !  
Lo, that Euripidean laurel-tree

Struck to the heart by lightning ! Sokrates  
Would question us, with buzz of how and why, 1440  
Wherefore the berry's virtue, the bloom's vice,  
Till we all wished him quiet with his friend ;

Agathon would compose an elegy,  
Lyric bewailment fit to move a stone,  
And, stones responsive, we might wince, 't is like ; 1445

Nay, with most cause of all to weep the least,  
Sophokles ordains mourning for his sake  
While we confess to a remorseful twinge :—

Suddenly, who but Aristophanes,  
Prompt to the rescue, puts forth solemn hand, 1450  
Singles us out the tragic tree's best branch,

Persuades it groundward and, at tip, appends,  
For votive-visor, Faun's goat-grinning face !  
Back it flies, evermore with jest a-top,  
And we recover the true mood, and laugh !” 1455

“I felt as when some Nikias,—ninny-like  
Troubled by sunspot-portent, moon-eclipse,—  
At fault a little, sees no choice but sound  
Retreat from foeman ; and his troops mistake  
The signal, and hail onset in the blast, 1460

And at their joyous answer, *alalé*,  
Back the old courage brings the scattered wits ;  
He wonders what his doubt meant, quick confirms

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The happy error, blows the charge amain.  
So I repaired things.

I. 1465

“ Both be praised ” thanked I.  
“ You who have laughed with Aristophanes,  
You who wept rather with the Lord of Tears !  
Priest, do thou, president alike o’er each,  
Tragic and Comic function of the god,  
Help with libation to the blended twain !  
Either of which who serving, only serves—  
Proclaims himself disqualified to pour  
To that Good Genius—complex Poetry,  
Uniting each god-grace, including both :  
Which, operant for body as for soul,  
Masters alike the laughter and the tears,  
Supreme in lowliest earth, sublimest sky.  
Who dares disjoin these,—whether he ignores  
Body or soul, whichever half destroys,—  
Maims the else perfect manhood, perpetrates  
Again the inexpiable crime we curse—  
Hacks at the Hermai, halves each guardian shape  
Combining, nowise vainly, prominence  
Of august head and enthroned intellect,  
With homelier symbol of asserted sense,—  
Nature’s prime impulse, earthly appetite.  
For, when our folly ventures on the freak,  
Would fain abolish joy and fruitfulness,  
Mutilate nature—what avails the Head  
Left solitarily predominant,—  
Unbodied soul,—not Hermes, both in one ?  
I, no more than our City, acquiesce  
In such a desecration, but defend  
Man’s double nature—ay, wert thou its foe !  
Could I once more, thou cold Euripides,  
Encounter thee, in nought would I abate  
My warfare, nor subdue my worst attack

1470

1475

1480

1485

1490

1495

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

On thee whose life-work preached 'Raise soul,  
     sink sense !  
 Evirate Hermes !'—would avenge the god,  
 And justify myself. Once face to face, 1500  
 Thou, the argute and tricky, shouldst not wrap,  
 As thine old fashion was, in silent scorn  
 The breast that quickened at the sting of truth,  
 Nor turn from me, as, if the tale be true,  
 From Lais when she met thee in thy walks, 1505  
 And questioned why she had no rights as thou :  
 Not so shouldst thou betake thee, be assured,  
 To book and pencil, deign me no reply !  
 I would extract an answer from those lips  
 So closed and cold, were mine the garden-chance ! 1510  
 Gone from the world ! Does none remain to take  
 Thy part and ply me with thy sophist-skill ?  
 No sun makes proof of his whole potency  
 For gold and purple in that orb we view :  
 The apparent orb does little but leave blind 1515  
 The audacious, and confused the worshipping ;  
 But, close on orb's departure, must succeed  
 The serviceable cloud,—must intervene,  
 Induce expenditure of rose and blue,  
 Reveal what lay in him was lost to us. 1520  
 So, friends, what hinders, as we homeward go,  
 If, privileged by triumph gained to-day,  
 We clasp that cloud our sun left saturate,  
 The Rhodian rosy with Euripides ?  
 Not of my audience on my triumph-day, 1525  
 She nor her husband ! After the night's news  
 Neither will sleep but watch ; I know the mood.  
 Accompany ! my crown declares my right !  
 And here you stand with those warm golden eyes !

"In honest language, I am scarce too sure 1530  
 Whether I really felt, indeed expressed

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Then, in that presence, things I now repeat :  
Nor half, nor any one word,—will that do ?  
May be, such eyes must strike conviction, turn  
One's nature bottom upwards, show the base— 1535  
The live rock latent under wave and foam :  
Superimposure these ! Yet solid stuff  
Will ever and anon, obeying star,  
(And what star reaches rock-nerve like an eye ?)  
Swim up to surface, spout or mud or flame, 1540  
And find no more to do than sink as fast.

“ Anyhow, I have followed happily  
The impulse, pledged my Genius with effect,  
Since, come to see you, I am shown—myself ! ”

I answered :

“ One of us declared for both 1545  
' Welcome the glory of Aristophanes.'  
The other adds : and,—if that glory last,  
Nor marsh-born vapour creep to veil the same,—  
Once entered, share in our solemnity !  
Commemorate, as we, Euripides ! ” 1550

“ What ? ” he looked round, “ I darken the bright  
house ?

Profane the temple of your deity ?

That 's true ! Else wherefore does he stand por-  
trayed ?

What Rhodian paint and pencil saved so much,  
Beard, freckled face, brow—all but breath, I hope ! 1555

Come, that 's unfair : myself am somebody,

Yet my pictorial fame 's just potter's-work,—

I merely figure on men's drinking-mugs !

I and the Flat-nose, Sophroniskos' son,

Oft make a pair. But what 's this lies below ? 1560

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

His table-book and graver, playwright's tool !  
 And lo, the sweet psalterion, strung and screwed,  
 Whereon he tried those *le-é-é-é-és*  
 And *ke-é-é-é-és* and turns and trills,  
 Lovely lark's tirra-lirra, lad's delight ! 1565  
 Aischulos' bronze-throat eagle-bark at blood  
 Has somehow spoiled my taste for twitterings !  
 With . . . what, and did he leave you 'Herakles' ?  
 The 'Frenzied Hero,' one unfractured sheet,  
 No pine-wood tablets smeared with treacherous  
     wax— 1570  
 Papuros perfect as e'er tempted pen !  
 This sacred twist of bay-leaves dead and sere  
 Must be that crown the fine work failed to catch,—  
 No wonder ! This might crown 'Antiope.'  
 'Herakles' triumph ? In your heart perhaps ! 1575  
 But elsewhere ? Come now, I'll explain the case,  
 Show you the main mistake. Give me the sheet !"

I interrupted :

"Aristophanes !

The stranger-woman sues in her abode—  
 'Be honoured as our guest !' But, call it—shrine, 1580  
 Then 'No dishonour to the Daimon !' bids  
 The priestess 'or expect dishonour's due !'  
 You enter fresh from your worst infamy,  
 Last instance of long outrage ; yet I pause,  
 Withhold the word a-tremble on my lip, 1585  
 Incline me, rather, yearn to reverence,—  
 So you but suffer that I see the blaze  
 And not the bolt,—the splendid fancy-fling,  
 Not the cold iron malice, the launched lie  
 Whence heavenly fire has withered ; impotent, 1590  
 Yet execrable, leave it 'neath the look  
 Of yon impassive presence ! What he scorned,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

His life long, need I touch, offend my foot,  
To prove that malice missed its mark, that lie  
Cumbers the ground, returns to whence it came? 1595  
I marvel, I deplore,—the rest be mute!  
But, throw off hate's celestialty,—  
Show me, apart from song-flash and wit-flame,  
A mere man's hand ignobly clenched against  
Yon supreme calmness,—and I interpose, 1600  
Such as you see me! Silk breaks lightning's  
blow!"

He seemed to scarce so much as notice me,  
Aught had I spoken, save the final phrase:  
Arrested there.

"Euripides grown calm!  
Calmness supreme means dead and therefore safe," 1605  
He muttered; then more audibly began—

"Dead! Such must die! Could people com-  
prehend!

There's the unfairness of it! So obtuse  
Are all: from Solon downward with his saw  
'Let none revile the dead,—no, though the son, 1610  
Nay, far descendant, should revile thyself!'—  
To him who made Elektra, in the act  
Of wreaking vengeance on her worst of foes,  
Scruple to blame, since speech that blames insults  
Too much the very villain life-released. 1615  
Now, *I* say, only after death, begins  
That formidable claim,—immunity  
Of faultiness from fault's due punishment!  
The living, who defame me,—why, they live:  
Fools,—I best prove them foolish by their life, 1620  
Will they but work on, lay their work by mine,  
And wait a little, one Olympiad, say!  
Then—where's the vital force, mine froze beside?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The sturdy fibre, shamed my brittle stuff?  
 The school-correctness, sure of wise award 1625  
 When my vagaries cease to tickle taste?  
 Where 's censure that must sink me, judgment big  
 Awaiting just the word posterity  
 Pants to pronounce? Time's wave breaks, buries  
     —*whom*,

Fools, when myself confronts you four years hence? 1630  
 But die, ere next Lenaia,—safely so  
 You 'scape me, slink with all your ignorance,  
 Stupidity and malice, to that hole  
 O'er which survivors croak 'Respect the dead!'  
 Ay, for I needs must! But allow me clutch 1635  
 Only a carrion-handful, lend it sense,  
 (Mine, not its own, or could it answer me?)  
 And question 'You, I pluck from hiding-place,  
 Whose cant was, certain years ago, my 'Clouds'  
 Might last until the swallows came with Spring— 1640  
 Whose chatter, 'Birds' are unintelligible,  
 Mere psychologic puzzling: poetry?  
 List, the true lay to rock a cradle with!  
*O man of Mituléné, wondrous wise!*

—Would not I rub each face in its own filth 1645  
 To tune of 'Now that years have come and gone,  
 How does the fact stand? What 's demonstrable  
 By time, that tries things?—your own test, not mine  
 Who think men are, were, ever will be fools,  
 Though somehow fools confute fools,—as these,  
     you! 1650

Don't mumble to the sheepish twos and threes  
 You cornered and called 'audience'! Face this *me*  
 Who know, and can, and—helped by fifty years—  
 Do pulverize you pygmies, then as now!

"Ay, now as then, I pulverize the brood, 1655  
 Balaustion! Mindful, from the first, where foe



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Would hide head safe when hand had flung its  
stone,

I did not turn cheek and take pleasantry,  
But flogged while skin could purple and flesh  
start,

To teach fools whom they tried conclusions with. 1660

First face a-splutter at me got such splotch  
Of prompt slab mud as, filling mouth to maw,  
Made its concern thenceforward not so much  
To criticize me as go cleanse itself.

The only drawback to which huge delight,— 1665  
(He saw it, how he saw it, that calm cold  
Sagacity you call Euripides !)

—Why, 't is that, make a muckheap of a man,  
There, pillared by your prowess, he remains,  
Immortally immerded. Not so he ! 1670

Men pelted him but got no pellet back.  
He reasoned, I 'll engage,—‘ Acquaint the world  
Certain minuteness butted at my knee ?

Dogface Eruxis, the small satirist,— 1675  
What better would the manikin desire

Than to strut forth on tiptoe, notable  
As who, so far up, fouled me in the flank ?’

So dealt he with the dwarfs : we giants, too,  
Why must we emulate their pin-point play ?  
Render imperishable—impotence, 1680

For mud throw mountains ? Zeus, by mud un-  
reached,—

Well, 't was no dwarf he heaved Olumpos at !”

My heart burned up within me to my tongue.

“ And why must men remember, ages hence,  
Who it was rolled down rocks, but refuse too— 1685  
Strattis might steal from ! mixture-monument,  
Recording what ? ‘ I, Aristophanes,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Who boast me much inventive in my art,  
 Against Euripides thus volleyed muck  
 Because, in art, he too extended bounds. 1690  
 I—patriot, loving peace and hating war,—  
 Choosing the rule of few, but wise and good,  
 Rather than mob-dictature, fools and knaves  
 However multiplied their mastery,—  
 Despising most of all the demagogue, 1695  
 (Noisome air-bubble, buoyed up, borne along  
 By kindred breath of knave and fool below,  
 Whose hearts swell proudly as each puffing face  
 Grows big, reflected in that glassy ball,  
 Vacuity, just bellied out to break 1700  
 And righteously bespatter friends the first)—  
 I loathing,—beyond less puissant speech  
 Than my own god-grand language to declare,—  
 The fawning, cozenage and calumny  
 Wherewith such favourite feeds the populace 1705  
 That fan and set him flying for reward :—  
 I who, detecting what vice underlies  
 Thought's superstructure,—fancy's sludge and  
     slime  
 'Twixt fact's sound floor and thought's mere  
     surface-growth  
 Of hopes and fears which root no deeplier down 1710  
 Than where all such mere fungi breed and bloat—  
 Namely, man's misconception of the God :—  
 I, loving, hating, wishful from my soul  
 That truth should triumph, falsehood have defeat,  
 —Why, all my soul's supremacy of power 1715  
 Did I pour out in volley just on him  
 Who, his whole life long, championed every cause  
 I called my heart's cause, loving as I loved,  
 Hating my hates, spurned falsehood, championed  
     truth,—  
 Championed truth not by flagellating foe 1720

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

With simple rose and lily, gibe and jeer,  
Sly wink of boon-companion o'er his bowze  
Who, while he blames the liquor, smacks the  
lip,  
Blames, doubtless, but leers condonation too,—  
No, the balled fist broke brow like thunderbolt, 1725  
Battered till brain flew! Seeing which descent,  
None questioned that was first acquaintanceship,  
The avenger's with the vice he crashed through  
bone.  
Still, he displeased me; and I turned from foe  
To fellow-fighter, flung much stone, more mud,— 1730  
But missed him, since he lives aloof, I see.'  
Pah! stop mores shame, deep-cutting glory through,  
Nor add, this poet, learned,—found no taunt  
Tell like 'That other poet studies books!'  
Wise,—cried 'At each attempt to move our hearts, 1735  
He uses the mere phrase of daily life!'  
Witty,—'His mother was a herb-woman!'  
Veracious, honest, loyal, fair and good,—  
'It was Kephisophon who helped him write!'  
  
'Whence,—O the tragic end of comedy!— 1740  
Balaustion pities Aristophanes.  
For, who believed him? Those who laughed so  
loud?  
They heard him call the sun Sicilian cheese!  
Had he called true cheese—curd, would muscle  
move?  
What made them laugh but the enormous lie? 1745  
'Kephisophon wrote Herakles? ha, ha,  
What can have stirred the wine-dregs, soured the  
soul  
And set a-lying Aristophanes?  
Some accident at which he took offence!  
The Tragic Master in a moody muse 1750

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Passed him unhailing, and it hurts—it hurts !  
Beside, there 's licence for the Wine-lees-song!'' "

Blood burnt the cheek-bone, each black eye  
flashed fierce.

" But this exceeds our licence ! Stay awhile—  
That 's the solution ! both are foreigners, 1755  
The fresh-come Rhodian lady and her spouse  
The man of Phokis : newly resident,  
Nowise instructed—that explains it all !  
No born and bred Athenian but would smile,  
Unless frown seemed more fit for ignorance. 1760  
These strangers have a privilege !

" You blame "

(Presently he resumed with milder mien)  
" Both theory and practice—Comedy :  
Blame her from altitudes the Tragic friend  
Rose to, and upraised friends along with him, 1765  
No matter how. Once there, all 's cold and fine,  
Passionless, rational ; our world beneath  
Shows (should you condescend to grace so much  
As glance at poor Athenai) grimly gross—  
A population which, mere flesh and blood, 1770  
Eats, drinks and kisses, falls to fisticuffs,  
Then hugs as hugely : speaks too as it acts,  
Prodigiously talks nonsense,—townsman needs  
Must parley in their town's vernacular.  
Such world has, of two courses, one to choose : 1775  
Unworld itself,—or else go blackening off  
To its crow-kindred, leave philosophy  
Her heights serene, fit perch for owls like you.  
Now, since the world demurs to either course,  
Permit me,—in default of boy or girl, 1780  
So they be reared Athenian, good and true,—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

To praise what you most blame! Hear Art's  
defence!

I'll prove our institution, Comedy,  
Coëval with the birth of freedom, matched  
So nice with our Republic, that its growth 1785  
Measures each greatness, just as its decline  
Would signalize the downfall of the pair.  
Our Art began when Bacchos . . . never mind!  
You and your master don't acknowledge gods:  
'They are not, no, they are not!' well,—began 1790  
When the rude instinct of our race outspoke,  
Found,—on recurrence of festivity  
Occasioned by black mother-earth's good will  
To children, as they took her vintage-gifts,—  
Found—not the least of many benefits— 1795  
That wine unlocked the stiffest lip, and loosed  
The tongue late dry and reticent of joke,  
Through custom's gripe which gladness thrusts  
aside.

So, emulating liberalities,  
Heaven joined with earth for that god's day at  
least, 1800  
Renewed man's privilege, grown obsolete,  
Of telling truth nor dreading punishment.  
Whereon the joyous band disguised their forms  
With skins, beast-fashion, daubed each phyz with  
dregs,  
Then hollaed 'Neighbour, you are fool, you—  
knave, 1805  
You—hard to serve, you—stingy to reward!'  
The guiltless crowed, the guilty sunk their crest,  
And good folk gained thereby, 't was evident.  
Whence, by degrees, a birth of happier thought,  
The notion came—not simply this to say, 1810  
But this to do—prove, put in evidence,  
And act the fool, the knave, the harsh, the hunks,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Who *did* prate, cheat, shake fist, draw purse-string  
tight,

As crowd might see, which only heard before.

“So played the Poet, with his man of parts ; 1815  
And all the others, found unqualified  
To mount cart and be persons, made the mob,  
Joined choros, fortified their fellows' fun,  
Anticipated the community,  
Gave judgment which the public ratified. 1820  
Suiting rough weapon doubtless to plain truth,  
They flung, for word-artillery, why—filth ;  
Still, folk who wiped the unsavoury salute  
From visage, would prefer the mess to wit—  
Steel, poked through midriff with a civil speech, 1825  
As now the way is : then, the kindlier mode  
Was—drub not stab, ribroast not scarify !  
So did Sousarion introduce, and so  
Did I, acceding, find the Comic Art :  
Club,—if I call it,—notice what 's implied ! 1830  
An engine proper for rough chastisement,  
No downright slaying : with impunity—  
Provided crabtree, steeped in oily joke,  
Deal only such a bruise as laughter cures.  
I kept the gained advantage : stickled still 1835  
For club-law—stout fun and allowanced thumps :  
Knocked in each knob a crevice to hold joke  
As fig-leaf holds the fat-fry.

“Next, whom thrash ?

Only the coarse fool and the clownish knave ?  
Higher, more artificial, composite 1840  
Offence should prove my prowess, eye and arm !  
Not who robs henroost, tells of untaxed figs,  
Spends all his substance on stewed ellops-fish,  
Or gives a pheasant to his neighbour's wife :

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

No ! strike malpractice that affects the State, 1845  
 The common weal—intriguer or poltroon,  
 Venality, corruption, what care I  
 If shrewd or witless merely?—so the thing  
 Lay sap to aught that made Athenai bright  
 And happy, change her customs, lead astray 1850  
 Youth or age, play the demagogue at Pnux,  
 The sophist in Palaistra, or—what 's worst,  
 As widest mischief,—from the Theatre  
 Preach innovation, bring contempt on oaths,  
 Adorn licentiousness, despise the Cult. 1855  
 Are such to be my game? Why, then there wants  
 Quite other cunning than a cudgel-sweep !  
 Grasp the old stout stock, but new tip with steel  
 Each boss, if I would bray—no callous hide  
 Simply, but Lamachos in coat of proof, 1860  
 Or Kleon cased about with impudence !  
 Shaft pushed no worse while point pierced spark-  
     ling so  
 That none smiled ' Sportive, what seems savagest,  
 —Innocuous anger, spiteless rustic mirth ! '   
 Yet spiteless in a sort, considered well, 1865  
 Since I pursued my warfare till each wound  
 Went through the mere man, reached the principle  
 Worth purging from Athenai. Lamachos ?  
 No, I attacked war's representative ;  
 Kleon ? No, flattery of the populace ; 1870  
 Sokrates ? No, but that pernicious seed  
 Of sophists whereby hopeful youth is taught  
 To jabber argument, chop logic, pore  
 On sun and moon, and worship Whirligig.  
 O your tragedian, with the lofty grace, 1875  
 Aims at no other and effects as much ?  
 Candidly : what 's a polished period worth,  
 Filed curt sententiousness of loaded line,  
 When he who deals out doctrine, primly steps

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

From just that selfsame moon he maunders of, 1880  
 And, blood-thinned by his pallid nutriment,  
 Proposes to rich earth-blood—purity ?  
 In me, 't was equal-balanced flesh rebuked  
 Excess alike in stuff-guts Glauketes  
 Or starveling Chairephon ; I challenged both,— 1885  
 Strong understander of our common life,  
 I urged sustainment of humanity.  
 Whereas when your tragedian cries up Peace—  
 He 's silent as to cheesecakes Peace may chew ;  
 Seeing through rabble-rule, he shuts his eye 1890  
 To what were better done than crowding Pnux—  
 That's—dance '*Threttanelo*, the Kuklops drunk !'  
 " My power has hardly need to vaunt itself !  
 Opposers peep and mutter, or speak plain :  
 ' No naming names in Comedy ! ' votes one, 1895  
 ' Nor vilifying live folk ! ' legislates  
 Another, ' urge amendment on the dead ! '  
 ' Don't throw away hard cash, ' supplies a third,  
 ' But crib from actor's dresses, choros-treats ! '  
 Then Kleon did his best to bully me : 1900  
 Called me before the Law Court : ' Such a play  
 Satirized citizens with strangers there,  
 Such other, '—why, its fault was in myself !  
 I was, this time, the stranger, privileged  
 To act no play at all,—Egyptian, I— 1905  
 Rhodian or Kameirensian, Aiginete,  
 Lindian, or any foreigner he liked—  
 Because I can't write Attic, probably !  
 Go ask my rivals,—how they roughed my fleece,  
 And how, shorn pink themselves, the huddled sheep 1910  
 Shiver at distance from the snapping shears !  
 Why must they needs provoke me ?

" All the same,

No matter for my triumph, I foretell



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Subsidence of the day-star : quench his beams ?  
 No Aias e'er was equal to the feat 1915  
 By throw of shield, tough-hided seven times  
     seven,  
 'Twixt sky and earth ! 't is dullards soft and sure  
 Who breathe against his brightest, here a sigh  
 And there a 'So let be, we pardon you !'  
 Till the minute mist hangs a block, has tamed 1920  
 Noonblaze to 'twilight mild and equable,'  
 Vote the old women spinning out of doors.  
 Give me the earth-spasm, when the lion ramped  
 And the bull gendered in the brave gold flare !  
 O you shall have amusement,—better still, 1925  
 Instruction ! no more horse-play, naming names,  
 Taxing the fancy when plain sense will serve !  
 Thearion, now, my friend who bakes you bread,  
 What 's worthier limning than his household life ?  
 His whims and ways, his quarrels with the spouse, 1930  
 And how the son, instead of learning knead  
 Kilikian loaves, brings heart-break on his sire  
 By buying horseflesh branded *San*, each flank,  
 From shrewd Menippos who imports the ware :  
 While pretty daughter *Kepphé* too much haunts 1935  
 The shop of *Sporgilos* the barber ! brave !  
 Out with Thearion's meal-tub politics  
 In lieu of *Pisthetairos*, *Strepsiades* !  
 That 's your exchange ? O Muse of *Megara* !  
 Advise the fools '*Feed babe on weasel-lap* 1940  
*For wild-boar's marrow, Cheiron's hero-pap,*  
*And rear, for man—Ariphrades, mayhap !'*  
 Yes, my *Balaustion*, yes, my *Euthukles*,  
 That 's *your* exchange,—who, foreigners in fact  
 And fancy, would impose your squeamishness 1945  
 On sturdy health, and substitute such brat  
 For the right offspring of us *Rocky Ones*,  
 Because babe kicks the cradle,—crows, not mewls !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

“Which brings me to the prime fault, poison-speck  
Whence all the plague springs—that first feud of all 1950  
'Twixt me and you and your Euripides.

‘Unworld the world’ frowns he, my opposite.  
I cry, ‘Life!’ ‘Death,’ he groans, ‘our better  
Life!’

Despise what is—the good and graspable,  
Prefer the out of sight and in at mind, 1955  
To village-joy, the well-side violet-patch,  
The jolly club-feast when our field’s in soak,  
Roast thrushes, hare-soup, pea-soup, deep washed  
down

With Peparethian; the prompt paying off  
That black-eyed brown-skinned country-flavoured  
wench 1960

We caught among our brushwood foraging :  
On these look fig-juice, curdle up life’s cream,  
And fall to magnifying misery !

Or, if you condescend to happiness,  
Why, talk, talk, talk about the empty name 1965  
While thing’s self lies neglected ’neath your nose !

I need particular discourtesy  
And private insult from Euripides  
To render contest with him credible ?

Say, all of me is outraged ! one stretched sense, 1970  
I represent the whole Republic,—gods,  
Heroes, priests, legislators, poets,—prone,  
And pummelled into insignificance,

If will in him were matched with power of stroke.  
For see what he has changed or hoped to change ! 1975  
How few years since, when he began the fight,  
Did there beat life indeed Athenai through !

Plenty and peace, then ! Hellas thundersmote  
The Persian. He himself had birth, you say,  
That morn salvation broke at Salamis, 1980  
And heroes still walked earth. Themistokles—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Surely his mere back-stretch of hand could still  
 Find, not so lost in dark, Odusseus?—he  
 Holding as surely on to Herakles,—  
 Who touched Zeus, link by link, the unruptured  
     chain ! 1985  
 Were poets absent? Aischulos might hail—  
 With Pindaros, Theognis,—whom for sire?  
 Homeros' self, departed yesterday!  
 While Hellas, saved and sung to, then and thus,—  
 Ah, people,—ah, lost antique liberty ! 1990  
 We lived, ourselves, undoubted lords of earth :  
 Wherever olives flourish, corn yields crop  
 To constitute our title—ours such land !  
 Outside of oil and breadstuff,—barbarism !  
 What need of conquest? Let barbarians starve ! 1995  
 Devote our whole strength to our sole defence,  
 Content with peerless native products, home,  
 Beauty profuse in earth's mere sights and sounds,  
 Such men, such women, and such gods their guard !  
 The gods? he worshipped best who feared them  
     most, 2000  
 And left their nature uninquired into,  
 —Nature? their very names ! pay reverence,  
 Do sacrifice for our part, theirs would be  
 To prove benignantest of playfellows.  
 With kindly humanism they countenanced 2005  
 Our emulation of divine escapes  
 Through sense and soul : soul, sense are made to  
     use ;  
 Use each, acknowledging its god the while !  
 Crush grape, dance, drink, indulge, for Bacchos'  
     sake !  
 'T is Aphrodité's feast-day—frisk and fling, 2010  
 Provided we observe our oaths, and house  
 Duly the stranger : Zeus takes umbrage else !  
 Ah, the great time—had I been there to taste !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Perikles, right Olumpian,—occupied  
 As yet with getting an Olumpos reared 2015  
 Marble and gold above Akropolis,—  
 Wisely so spends what thrifty fools amassed  
 For cut-throat projects. Who carves Promachos?  
 Who writes the Oresteia ?  

“ Ah, the time !

 For, all at once, a cloud has blanched the blue, 020  
 A cold wind creeps through the close vineyard-rank,  
 The olive-leaves curl, violets crisp and close  
 Like a nymph's wrinkling at the bath's first splash  
 On breast. (Your pardon !) There 's a restless  
     change,  
 Deterioration. Larks and nightingales 2025  
 Are silenced, here and there a gor-crow grim  
 Flaps past, as scenting opportunity.  
 Where Kimon passaged to the Boulé once,  
 A starveling crew, unkempt, unshorn, unwashed,  
 Occupy altar-base and temple-step, 2030  
 Are minded to indoctrinate our youth !  
 How call these carrion kill-joys that intrude ?  
 ‘ Wise men, ’ their nomenclature ! Prodikos—  
 Who scarce could, unassisted, pick his steps  
 From way Theseia to the Tripods' way,— 2035  
 This empty noddle comprehends the sun,—  
 How he 's Aigina's bigness, wheels no whit  
 His way from east to west, nor wants a steed !  
 And here 's Protagoras sets wrongheads right,  
 Explains what virtue, vice, truth, falsehood mean, 2040  
 Makes all we seemed to know prove ignorance  
 Yet knowledge also, since, on either side  
 Of any question, something is to say,  
 Nothing to 'stablish, all things to disturb !  
 And shall youth go and play at kottabos, 2045  
 Leaving unsettled whether moon-spots breed ?  
 Or dare keep Choes ere the problem 's solved—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Why should I like my wife who dislikes me ?  
' But sure the gods permit this, censure that ?'  
So tell them ! straight the answer 's in your teeth : 2050  
' You relegate these points, then, to the gods ?  
What and where are they ?' What my sire  
supposed,  
And where yon cloud conceals them ! ' Till they  
'scape  
And scramble down to Leda, as a swan,  
Europa, as a bull ! why not as—ass 2055  
To somebody ? Your sire was Zeus perhaps !  
Either—away with such ineptitude !  
Or, wanting energy to break your bonds,  
Stick to the good old stories, think the rain  
Is—Zeus distilling pickle through a sieve ! 2060  
Think thunder 's thrown to break Theoros' head  
For breaking oaths first ! Meanwhile let ourselves  
Instruct your progeny you prate like fools  
Of father Zeus, who 's but the atmosphere,  
Brother Poseidon, otherwise called—sea, 2065  
And son Hephaistos—fire and nothing else !  
Over which nothings there 's a something still,  
"Necessity," that rules the universe  
And cares as much about your Choes-feast  
Performed or intermitted, as you care 2070  
Whether gnats sound their trump from head or  
tail !'  
When, stupefied at such philosophy,  
We cry—Arrest the madmen, governor !  
Pound hemlock and pour bull's-blood, Perikles !—  
Would you believe ? The Olumpian bends his  
brow, 2075  
Scarce pauses from his building ! ' Say they thus ?  
Then, they say wisely. Anaxagoras,  
I had not known how simple proves eclipse  
But for thy teaching ! Go, fools, learn like me !'

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

" Well, Zeus nods : man must reconcile himself, 2080  
 So, let the Charon's-company harangue,  
 And Anaxagoras be—as we wish !  
 A comfort is in nature : while grass grows  
 And water runs, and sesame pricks tongue,  
 And honey from Brilesian hollow melts 2085  
 On mouth, and Bacchis' flavorful lip beats both,  
 You will not be untaught life's use, young man ?  
*Pho!* My young man just proves that panniered ass  
 Said to have borne Youth strapped on his stout back,  
 With whom a serpent bargained, bade him swap 2090  
 The priceless boon for—water to quench thirst !  
 What's youth to my young man ? In love with age,  
 He Spartanizes, argues, fasts and frowns,  
 Denies the plainest rules of life, long since  
 Proved sound ; sets all authority aside, 2095  
 Must simply recommence things, learn ere act,  
 And think out thoroughly how youth should pass—  
 Just as if youth stops passing, all the same !

" One last resource is left us—poetry !  
 Vindicate nature, prove Plataian help, 2100  
 Turn out, a thousand strong, all right and tight,  
 To save Sense, poet ! Bang the sophist-brood  
 Would cheat man out of wholesome sustenance  
 By swearing wine is water, honey—gall,  
 Saperdion—the Empousa ! Panic-smit, 2105  
 Our juveniles abstain from Sense and starve :  
 Be yours to disenchant them ! Change things  
 back !

Or better, strain a point the other way  
 And handsomely exaggerate wronged truth !  
 Lend wine a glory never gained from grape, 2110  
 Help honey with a snatch of him we style  
 The Muses' Bee, bay-bloom-fed Sophokles,  
 And give Saperdion a Kimberic robe !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

" 'I, his successor,' gruff the answer grunts,  
 'Incline to poetize philosophy, 2115  
 Extend it rather than restrain; as thus—  
 Are heroes men? No more, and scarce as much,  
 Shall mine be represented. Are men poor?  
 Behold them ragged, sick, lame, halt and blind!  
 Do they use speech? Ay, street-terms, market-  
 phrase! 2120  
 Having thus drawn sky earthwards, what comes next  
 But dare the opposite, lift earth to sky?  
 Mere puppets once, I now make womankind,  
 For thinking, saying, doing, match the male.  
 Lift earth? I drop to, dally with, earth's dung! 2125  
 —Recognize in the very slave—man's mate,  
 Declare him brave and honest, kind and true,  
 And reasonable as his lord, in brief.  
 I paint men as they are—so runs my boast—  
 Not as they should be: paint—what's part of man 2130  
 —Women and slaves—not as, to please your pride,  
 They should be, but your equals, as they are.  
 O and the Gods! Instead of abject mien,  
 Submissive whisper, while my Choros cants  
 "Zeus,—with thy cubit's length of attributes,— 2135  
 May I, the ephemeral, ne'er scrutinize  
 Who made the heaven and earth and all things  
 there!"  
 Myself shall say' . . . Ay, Herakles may help!  
 Give me,—I want the very words,—attend!"

He read. Then "Murder's out,—'There are no  
 Gods.' 2140

Man has no master, owns, by consequence,  
 No right, no wrong, except to please or plague  
 His nature: what man likes be man's sole law!  
 Still, since he likes Saperdion, honey, figs,  
 Man may reach freedom by your roundabout. 2145

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

'Never believe yourselves the freer thence !  
There are no gods, but there 's "Necessity,"—  
Duty enjoined you, fact in figment's place,  
Throned on no mountain, native to the mind !  
Therefore deny yourselves Saperdion, figs 2150  
And honey, for the sake of—what I dream,  
A-sitting with my legs up !'

"Infamy !

The poet casts in calm his lot with these  
Assailants of Apollon ! Sworn to serve  
Each Grace, the Furies call him minister— 2155  
He, who was born for just that roseate world  
Renounced so madly, where what 's false is fact,  
Where he makes beauty out of ugliness,  
Where he lives, life itself disguised for him  
As immortality—so works the spell, 2160  
The enthusiastic mood which marks a man  
Muse-mad, dream-drunken, wrapt around by verse,  
Encircled with poetic atmosphere,  
As lark emballed by its own crystal song,  
Or rose enmisted by that scent it makes ! 2165  
No, this were unreality ! the real  
He wants, not falsehood,—truth alone he seeks,  
Truth, for all beauty ! Beauty, in all truth—  
That 's certain somehow ! Must the eagle lilt  
Lark-like, needs fir-tree blossom rose-like ? No ! 2170  
Strength and utility charm more than grace,  
And what 's most ugly proves most beautiful.  
So much assistance from Euripides !

"Whereupon I betake me, since needs must,  
To a concluding—'Go and feed the crows !' 2175  
Do ! Spoil your art as you renounce your life,  
Poetize your so precious system, do,  
Degrade the hero, nullify the god,



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Exhibit women, slaves and men as peers,—  
 Your castigation follows prompt enough ! 2180  
 When all 's concocted upstairs, heels o'er head,  
 Down must submissive drop the masterpiece  
 For public praise or blame : so, praise away,  
 Friend Sokrates, wife's-friend Kephisophon !  
 Boast innovations, cramp phrase, uncouth song, 2185  
 Hard matter and harsh manner, gods, men, slaves  
 And women jumbled to a laughing-stock  
 Which Hellas shall hold sides at lest she split !  
 Hellas, on these, shall have her word to say !

“She has it and she says it—there 's the curse!— 2190  
 She finds he makes the shag-rag hero-race,  
 The noble slaves, wise women, move as much  
 Pity and terror as true tragic types :  
 Applauds inventiveness—the plot so new,  
 The turn and trick subsidiary so strange ! 2195  
 She relishes that homely phrase of life,  
 That commontown-talk, more than trumpet-blasts :  
 Accords him right to chop and change a myth :  
 What better right had he, who told the tale  
 In the first instance, to embellish fact ? 2200  
 This last may disembellish yet improve !  
 Both find a block : this man carves back to bull  
 What first his predecessor cut to sphynx :  
 Such genuine actual roarer, nature's brute,  
 Intelligible to our time, was sure 2205  
 The old-world artist's purpose, had he worked  
 To mind ; this both means and makes the thing !  
 If, past dispute, the verse slips oily-bathed  
 In unctuous music—say, effeminate—  
 We also say, like Kuthereia's self, 2210  
 A lulling effluence which enswathes some isle  
 Where hides a nymph, not seen but felt the more.  
 That 's Hellas' verdict !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

“ Does Euripides

Even so far absolved, remain content ?

Nowise ! His task is to refine, refine, 2215

Divide, distinguish, subtilize away

Whatever seemed a solid planting-place

For foot-fall,—not in that phantasmal sphere

Proper to poet, but on vulgar earth

Where people used to tread with confidence. 2220

There 's left no longer one plain positive

Enunciation incontestable

Of what is good, right, decent here on earth.

Nobody now can say 'this plot is mine,

Though but a plethron square,—my duty !'—

‘ Yours ? 2225

Mine, or at least not yours,' snaps somebody !

And, whether the dispute be parent-right

Or children's service, husband's privilege

Or wife's submission, there 's a snarling straight,

Smart passage of opposing 'yea' and 'nay,' 2230

'Should,' 'should not,' till, howe'er the contest end,

Spectators go off sighing—Clever thrust !

Why was I so much hurried to pay debt,

Attend my mother, sacrifice an ox,

And set my name down 'for a trireme, good' ? 2235

Something I might have urged on t' other side !

No doubt, Kresphontes or Bellerophon

We don't meet every day ; but Stab-and-stitch

The tailor—ere I turn the drachmas o'er

I owe him for a chiton, as he thinks, 2240

I 'll pose the blockhead with an argument !

“ So has he triumphed, your Euripides !

Oh, I concede, he rarely gained a prize :

That 's quite another matter ! cause for that !

Still, when 't was got by Ions, Iophons, 2245

Off he would pace confoundedly superb,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Supreme, no smile at movement on his mouth  
 Till Sokrates winked, whispered : out it broke !  
 And Aristullos jotted down the jest,  
 While Iophons or Ions, bay on brow, 2250  
 Looked queerly, and the foreigners—like you—  
 Asked o'er the border with a puzzled smile  
 —‘ And so, you value Ions, Iophons,  
 Euphorions ! How about Euripides ? ’  
 (Eh, brave bard's-champion ? Does the anger boil ? 2255  
 Keep within bounds a moment,—eye and lip  
 Shall loose their doom on me, their fiery worst !)  
 What strangers ? Archelaos heads the file !  
 He sympathizes, he concerns himself,  
 He pens epistle, each successful play : 2260  
 ‘ Athenai sinks effete ; there 's younger blood  
 In Makedonia. Visit where I rule !  
 Do honour to me and take gratitude !  
 Live the guest's life, or work the poet's way,  
 Which also means the statesman's : he who wrote 2265  
 Erechtheus may seem rawly politic  
 At home where Kleophon is ripe ; but here  
 My council-board permits him choice of seats. ’  
 “ Now this was operating,—what should prove  
 A poison-tree, had flowered far on to fruit 2270  
 For many a year,—when I was moved, first man,  
 To dare the adventure, down with root and branch.  
 So, from its sheath I drew my Comic steel,  
 And dared what I am now to justify.  
 A serious question first, though !

“ Once again ! 2275

Do you believe, when I aspired in youth,  
 I made no estimate of power at all,  
 Nor paused long, nor considered much, what class  
 Of fighters I might claim to join, beside  
 That class wherewith I cast in company ? 2280

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Say, you—profuse of praise no less than blame—  
Could not I have competed—franker phrase  
Might trulier correspond to meaning—still,  
Competed with your Tragic paragon?  
Suppose me minded simply to make verse, 2285  
To fabricate, parade resplendent arms,  
Flourish and sparkle out a Trilogy,—  
Where was the hindrance? But my soul bade  
‘Fight!

Leave flourishing for mock-foe, pleasure-time ;  
Prove arms efficient on real heads and hearts !’ 2290  
How? With degeneracy sapping fast  
The Marathonian muscle, nerved of old  
To maul the Mede, now strung at best to help  
—How did I fable?—War and Hubbub mash  
To mincemeat Fatherland and Brotherhood, 2295  
Pound in their mortar Hellas, State by State,  
That greed might gorge, the while frivolity  
Rubbed hands and smacked lips o’er the dainty  
dish!

Authority, experience—pushed aside  
By any upstart who pleads throng and press 2300  
O’ the people! ‘Think, say, do thus!’ Where-  
fore, pray?

‘We are the people : who impugns our right  
Of choosing Kleon that tans hide so well,  
Huperbolos that turns out lamps so trim,  
Hemp-seller Eukrates or Lusikles 2305  
Sheep-dealer, Kephalos the potter’s son,  
Diitriphes who weaves the willow-work  
To go round bottles, and Nausikudes  
The meal-man? Such we choose and more, their  
mates,

To think and say and do in our behalf!’ 2310  
While sophistry wagged tongue, emboldened still,  
Found matter to propose, contest, defend,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

'Stablish, turn topsyturvy,—all the same,  
 No matter what, provided the result  
 Were something new in place of something old,— 2315  
 Set wagging by pure insolence of soul  
 Which needs must pry into, have warrant for  
 Each right, each privilege good policy  
 Protects from curious eye and prating mouth !  
 Everywhere lust to shape the world anew, 2320  
 Spurn this Athenai as we find her, build  
 A new impossible Cloudcuckooburg  
 For feather-headed birds, once solid men,  
 Where rules, discarding jolly habitude,  
 Nourished on myrtle-berries and stray ants, 2325  
 King Tereus who, turned Hoopoe Triple-Crest,  
 Shall terrify and bring the gods to terms !

“Where was I? Oh ! Things ailing thus—I ask,  
 What cure? Cut, thrust, hack, hew at heap-on-  
     heaped  
 Abomination with the exquisite 2330  
 Palaistra-tool of polished Tragedy?  
 Erechtheus shall harangue Amphiktuon,  
 And incidentally drop word of weight  
 On justice, righteousness, so turn aside  
 The audience from attacking Sicily !— 2335  
 The more that Choros, after he recounts  
 How Phrixos rode the ram, the far-famed Fleece,  
 Shall add—at last fall of grave dancing-foot—  
 ‘Aggression never yet was helped by Zeus !’  
 That helps or hinders Alkibiades? 2340  
 As well expect, should Pheidias carve Zeus’ self  
 And set him up, some half a mile away,  
 His frown would frighten sparrows from your field !  
 Eagles may recognize their lord, belike,  
 But as for vulgar sparrows,—change the god, 2345  
 And plant some big Priapos with a pole !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

I wield the Comic weapon rather—hate !  
 Hate ! honest, earnest and directest hate—  
 Warfare wherein I close with enemy,  
 Call him one name and fifty epithets, 2350  
 Remind you his great-grandfather sold bran,  
 Describe the new exomion, sleeveless coat  
 He knocked me down last night and robbed me of,  
 Protest he voted for a tax on air !  
 And all this hate—if I write Comedy— 2355  
 Finds tolerance, most like—applause, perhaps  
 True veneration ; for I praise the god  
 Present in person of his minister,  
 And pay—the wilder my extravagance—  
 The more appropriate worship to the Power 2360  
 Adulterous, night-roaming, and the rest :  
 Otherwise,—that originative force  
 Of nature, impulse stirring death to life,  
 Which, underlying law, seems lawlessness,  
 Yet is the outbreak which, ere order be, 2365  
 Must thrill creation through, warm stocks and  
     stones,  
 Phales Iacchos.

“Comedy for me !

Why not for you, my Tragic masters ? Sneaks  
 Whose art is mere desertion of a trust !  
 Such weapons lay to hand, the ready club, 2370  
 The clay-ball, on the ground a stone to snatch,—  
 Arms fit to bruise the boar's neck, break the chine  
 O' the wolf,—and you must impiously—despise ?  
 No, I 'll say, furtively let fall that trust  
 Consigned you ! 'T was not ' take or leave alone,' 2375  
 But ' take and, wielding, recognize your god  
 In his prime attributes !' And though full soon  
 You sneaked, subsided into poetry,  
 Nor met your due reward, still,—heroize

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And speechify and sing-song and forego 2380  
 Far as you may your function,—still its pact  
 Endures, one piece of early homage still  
 Exacted of you ; after your three bouts  
 At hoitytoity, great men with long words,  
 And so forth,—at the end, must tack itself 2385  
 The genuine sample, the Satyric Play,  
 Concession, with its wood-boys' fun and freak,  
 To the true taste of the mere multitude.  
 Yet, there again ! What does your Still-at-itch,  
 Always-the-innovator ? Shrugs and shirks ! 2390  
 Out of his fifty Trilogies, some five  
 Are somehow suited : Satyrs dance and sing,  
 Try merriment, a grimly prank or two,  
 Sour joke squeezed through pursed lips and teeth  
     on edge,  
 Then quick on top of toe to pastoral sport, 2395  
 Goat-tending and sheep-herding, cheese and cream,  
 Soft grass and silver rillets, country-fare—  
 When throats were promised Thasian ! Five such  
     feats,—  
 Then frankly off he threw the yoke : next Droll,  
 Next festive drama, covenanted fun, 2400  
 Decent reversion to indecency,  
 Proved—your 'Alkestis' ! There 's quite fun  
     enough,  
 Herakles drunk ! From out fate's blackening wave  
 Calamitous, just zigzags some shot star,  
 Poor promise of faint joy, and turns the laugh 2405  
 On dupes whose fears and tears were all in waste !

“ For which sufficient reasons, in truth's name,  
 I closed with whom you count the Meaner Muse,  
 Classed me with Comic Poets who should weld  
 Dark with bright metal, show their blade may keep 2410  
 Its adamantine birthright though a-blaze

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

With poetry, the gold, and wit, the gem,  
And strike mere gold, unstiffened out by steel,  
Or gem, no iron joints its strength around,  
From hand of—posturer, not combatant ! 2415

“Such was my purpose : it succeeds, I say !  
Have not we beaten Kallikratidas,  
Not humbled Sparté ? Peace awaits our word,  
Spite of Theramenes, and fools his like.  
Since my previsions,—warranted too well 2420  
By the long war now waged and worn to end—  
Had spared such heritage of misery,  
My after-counsels scarce need fear repulse.  
Athenai, taught prosperity has wings,  
Cages the glad recapture. Demos, see, 2425  
From folly's premature decrepitude  
Boiled young again, emerges from the stew  
Of twenty-five years' trouble, sits and sways,  
One brilliance and one balsam,—sways and sits  
Monarch of Hellas ! ay and, sage again, 2430  
No longer jeopardizes chieftainship,  
No longer loves the brutish demagogue  
Appointed by a bestial multitude  
But seeks out sound advisers. Who are they ?  
Ourselves, of parentage proved wise and good ! 2435  
To such may hap strains thwarting quality,  
(As where shall want its flaw mere human stuff ?)  
Still, the right grain is proper to right race ;  
What 's contrary, call curious accident !  
Hold by the usual ! Orchard-grafted tree, 2440  
Not wilding, race-horse-sired, not rouncey-born,  
Aristocrat, no sausage-selling snob !  
Nay, why not Alkibiades, come back  
Filled by the Genius, freed of petulance,  
Frailty,—mere youthfulness that 's all at fault,— 2445  
Advanced to Perikles and something more ?



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

—Being at least our duly born and bred,—  
 Curse on what chaunoproct first gained his ear  
 And got his . . . well, once true man in right  
     place,  
 Our commonalty soon content themselves 2450  
 With doing just what they are born to do,  
 Eat, drink, make merry, mind their own affairs  
 And leave state-business to the larger brain.  
 I do not stickle for their punishment ;  
 But certain culprits have a cloak to twitch, 2455  
 A purse to pay the piper : flog, say I,  
 Your fine fantastics, paragons of parts,  
 Who choose to play the important ! Far from  
     side  
 With us, their natural supports, allies,—  
 And, best by brain, help who are best by birth 2460  
 To fortify each weak point in the wall  
 Built broad and wide and deep for permanence  
 Between what 's high and low, what 's rare and  
     vile,—  
 They cast their lot perversely in with low  
 And vile, lay flat the barrier, lift the mob 2465  
 To dizzy heights where Privilege stood firm.  
 And then, simplicity become conceit,—  
 Woman, slave, common soldier, artisan,  
 Crazy with new-found worth, new-fangled claims,—  
 These must be taught next how to use their heads 2470  
 And hands in driving man's right to mob's rule !  
 What fellows thus inflame the multitude ?  
 Your Sokrates, still crying ' Understand !'  
 Your Aristullos,—' Argue !' Last and worst,  
 Should, by good fortune, mob still hesitate, 2475  
 Remember there 's degree in heaven and earth,  
 Cry ' Aischulos enjoined us fear the gods,  
 And Sophokles advised respect the kings !'  
 Why, your Euripides informs them—' Gods ?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

They are not ! Kings ? They are, but . . . do  
not I, 2480  
In Suppliants, make my Theseus,—yours, no  
more,—  
Fire up at insult of who styles him King ?  
Play off that Herald, I despise the most,  
As patronizing kings' prerogative  
Against a Theseus proud to dare no step 2485  
Till he consult the people ?'

“ Such as these—  
Ah, you expect I am for strangling straight ?  
Nowise, Balaustion ! All my roundabout  
Ends at beginning, with my own defence.  
I dose each culprit just with—Comedy. 2490  
Let each be doctored in exact the mode  
Himself prescribes : by words, the word-monger—  
My words to his words,—my lies, if you like,  
To his lies. Sokrates I nickname thief,  
Quack, necromancer ; Aristullos,—say, 2495  
Male Kirké who bewitches and bewrays  
And changes folk to swine ; Euripides,—  
Well, I acknowledge ! Every word is false,  
Looked close at ; but stand distant and stare  
through,  
All 's absolute indubitable truth 2500  
Behind lies, truth which only lies declare !  
For come, concede me truth 's in thing not word,  
Meaning not manner ! Love smiles 'rogue' and  
'wretch'  
When 'sweet' and 'dear' seem vapid : Hate adopts  
Love's 'sweet' and 'dear' when 'rogue' and  
'wretch' fall flat : 2505  
Love, Hate—are truths, then, each, in sense not  
sound.  
Further : if Love, remaining Love, fell back

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

On 'sweet' and 'dear,'—if Hate, though Hate the  
 same,  
 Dropped down to 'rogue' and 'wretch,'—each  
 phrase were false.

Good! and now grant I hate no matter whom 2510  
 With reason: I must therefore fight my foe,  
 Finish the mischief which made enmity.  
 How? By employing means to most hurt him  
 Who much harmed me. What way did he do  
 harm?

Through word or deed? Through word? with  
 word, wage war! 2515

Word with myself directly? As direct  
 Reply shall follow: word to you, the wise,  
 Whence indirectly came the harm to me?  
 What wisdom I can muster waits on such.

Word to the populace which, misconceived 2520  
 By ignorance and incapacity,  
 Ends in no such effect as follows cause  
 When I, or you the wise, are reasoned with,  
 So damages what I and you hold dear?  
 In that event, I ply the populace 2525

With just such word as leavens their whole lump  
 To the right ferment for my purpose. *They*  
 Arbitrate properly between us both?  
*They* weigh my answer with his argument,  
 Match quip with quibble, wit with eloquence? 2530

All they attain to understand is—blank!  
 Two adversaries differ: which is right  
 And which is wrong, none takes on him to say,  
 Since both are unintelligible. Pooh!  
 Swear my foe's mother vended herbs she stole, 2535  
 They fall a-laughing! Add,—his household  
 drudge  
 Of all-work justifies that office well,  
 Kisses the wife, composing him the play,—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

They grin at whom they gaped in wonderment,  
 And go off—'Was he such a sorry scrub?' 2540  
 This other seems to know! we praised too fast!  
 Why then, my lies have done the work of truth,  
 Since 'scrub,' improper designation, means  
 Exactly what the proper argument  
 —Had such been comprehensible—proposed 2545  
 To proper audience—were I graced with such—  
 Would properly result in; so your friend  
 Gets an impartial verdict on his verse  
 'The tongue swears, but the soul remains unsworn!'

"There, my Balaustion! All is summed and said. 2550  
 No other cause of quarrel with yourself!  
 Euripides and Aristophanes  
 Differ: he needs must round our difference  
 Into the mob's ear; with the mob I plead.  
 You angrily start forward 'This to me?' 2555  
 No speck of this on you the thrice refined!  
 Could parley be restricted to us two,  
 My first of duties were to clear up doubt  
 As to our true divergence each from each.  
 Does my opinion so diverge from yours? 2560  
 Probably less than little—not at all!  
 To know a matter, for my very self  
 And intimates—that's one thing; to imply  
 By 'knowledge'—loosing whatsoe'er I know  
 Among the vulgar who, by mere mistake, 2565  
 May brain themselves and me in consequence,—  
 That's quite another. 'O the daring flight!  
 This only bard maintains the exalted brow,  
 Nor grovels in the slime nor fears the gods!  
 Did *I* fear—*I* play superstitious fool, 2570  
 Who, with the due proviso, introduced,  
 Active and passive, their whole company  
 As creatures too absurd for scorn itself?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Zeus? I have styled him—'slave, mere thrashing-block!'

I'll tell you : in my very next of plays, 2575

At Bacchos' feast, in Bacchos' honour, full

In front of Bacchos' representative,

I mean to make main-actor—Bacchos' self!

Forth shall he strut, apparent, first to last,

A blockhead, coward, braggart, liar, thief, 2580

Demonstrated all these by his own mere

Xanthias the man-slave : such man shows such god

Shamed to brute-beastship by comparison!

And when ears have their fill of his abuse,

And eyes are sated with his pummelling,— 2585

My Choros taking care, by, all the while,

Singing his glory, that men recognize

A god in the abused and pummelled beast,—

Then, should one ear be stopped of auditor,

Should one spectator shut revolted eye,— 2590

Why, the Priest's self will first raise outraged voice

'Back, thou barbarian, thou ineptitude!

Does not most license hallow best our day,

And least decorum prove its strictest rite?

Since Bacchos bids his followers play the fool, 2595

And there's no fooling like a majesty

Mocked at,—who mocks the god, obeys the law—

Law which, impute but indiscretion to,

And . . . why, the spirit of Euripides

Is evidently active in the world! 2600

Do I stop here? No! feat of flightier force!

See Hermes! what commotion raged,—reflect!—

When imaged god alone got injury

By drunkards' frolic! How Athenai stared

Aghast, then fell to frenzy, fit on fit,— 2605

Ever the last the longest! At this hour,

The craze abates a little; so, my Play

Shall have up Hermes : and a Karion, slave,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

(Since there 's no getting lower) calls our friend  
 The profitable god, we honour so, 2610  
 Whatever contumely fouls the mouth—  
 Bids him go earn more honest livelihood  
 By washing tripe in well-trough—wash he does,  
 Duly obedient! Have I dared my best?  
 Asklepios, answer!—deity in vogue, 2615  
 Who visits Sophokles familiarly,  
 If you believe the old man,—at his age,  
 Living is dreaming, and strange guests haunt door  
 Of house, belike, peep through and tap at times  
 When a friend yawns there, waiting to be fetched,— 2620  
 At any rate, to memorize the fact,  
 He has spent money, set an altar up  
 In the god's temple, now in much repute.  
 That temple-service trust me to describe—  
 Cheaters and choused, the god, his brace of girls, 2625  
 Their snake, and how they manage to snap gifts  
 'And consecrate the same into a bag,'  
 For whimsies done away with in the dark!  
 As if, a stone's throw from that theatre  
 Whereon I thus unmask their dupery, 2630  
 The thing were not religious and august!

"Of Sophokles himself—nor word nor sign  
 Beyond a harmless parody or so!  
 He founds no anti-school, upsets no faith,  
 But, living, lets live, the good easy soul 2635  
 Who,—if he saves his cash, unpoetlike,  
 Loves wine and—never mind what other sport,  
 Boasts for his father just a sword-blade-smith,  
 Proves but queer captain when the people claim,  
 For one who conquered with 'Antigone,' 2640  
 The right to undertake a squadron's charge,—  
 And needs the son's help now to finish plays,  
 Seeing his dotage calls for governance

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And Iophon to share his property,—  
 Why, of all this, reported true, I breathe 2645  
 Not one word—true or false, I like the man.  
 Sophokles lives and lets live : long live he !  
 Otherwise,—sharp the scourge and hard the blow !

“ And what 's my teaching but—accept the old,  
 Contest the strange ! acknowledge work that 's done, 2650  
 Misdoubt men who have still their work to do !  
 Religions, laws and customs, poetries,  
 Are old ? So much achieved victorious truth !  
 Each work was product of a life-time, wrung  
 From each man by an adverse world : for why ? 2655  
 He worked, destroying other older work  
 Which the world loved and so was loth to lose.  
 Whom the world beat in battle—dust and ash !  
 Who beat the world, left work in evidence,  
 And wears its crown till new men live new lives, 2660  
 And fight new fights, and triumph in their turn.  
 I mean to show you on the stage : you 'll see  
 My Just Judge only venture to decide  
 Between two suitors, which is god, which man,  
 By thrashing both of them as flesh can bear. 2665  
 You shall agree,—whichever bellows first,  
 He 's human ; who holds longest out, divine :  
 That is the only equitable test.  
 Cruelty ? Pray, who pricked them on to court  
 My thong's award ? Must they needs dominate ? 2670  
 Then I—rebel. Their instinct grasps the new ?  
 Mine bids retain the old : a fight must be,  
 And which is stronger the event will show.  
 O but the pain ! Your proved divinity  
 Still smarts all reddened ? And the rightlier served ! 2675  
 Was not some man's-flesh in him, after all ?  
 Do let us lack no frank acknowledgment  
 There 's nature common to both gods and men !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

All of them—spirit? What so winced was clay.  
 Away pretence to some exclusive sphere 2680  
 Cloud-nourishing a sole selected few  
 Fume-fed with self-superiority!  
 I stand up for the common coarse-as-clay  
 Existence,—stamp and ramp with heel and hoof  
 On solid vulgar life, you fools disown. 2685  
 Make haste from your unreal eminence,  
 And measure lengths with me upon that ground  
 Whence this mud-pellet sings and summons you!  
 I know the soul, too, how the spark ascends  
 And how it drops apace and dies away. 2690  
 I am your poet-peer, man thrice your match.  
 I too can lead an airy life when dead,  
 Fly like Kinesias when I 'm cloudward bound;  
 But here, no death shall mix with life it mars.

“So, my old enemy who caused the fight, 2695  
 Own I have beaten you, Euripides!  
 Or,—if your advocate would contravene,—  
 Help him, Balaustion! Use the rosy strength!  
 I have not done my utmost,—treated you  
 As I might Aristullos, mint-perfumed,— 2700  
 Still, let the whole rage burst in brave attack!  
 Don't pay the poor ambiguous compliment  
 Of fearing any pearl-white knuckled fist  
 Will damage this broad buttress of a brow!  
 Fancy yourself my Aristonumos, 2705  
 Ameipsias or Sannurion: punch and pound!  
 Three cuckoos who cry ‘cuckoo’! much I care!  
 They boil a stone! *Neblaretai! Rattei!*”

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Cannot your task have end here, Euthukles?  
 Day by day glides our galley on its path: 2710  
 Still sunrise and still sunset, Rhodes half-reached,



## ARISTOPHANES APOLOGY

And still, my patient scribe ! no sunset's peace  
 Descends more punctual than that brow's incline  
 O'er tablets which your serviceable hand  
 Prepares to trace. Why treasure up, forsooth, 2715  
 These relics of a night that make me rich,  
 But, half-remembered merely, leave so poor  
 Each stranger to Athenai and her past ?  
 For—how remembered ! As some greedy hind  
 Persuades a honeycomb, beyond the due, 2720  
 To yield its hoarding,—heedless what alloy  
 Of the poor bee's own substance taints the gold  
 Which, unforced, yields few drops, but purity,—  
 So would you fain relieve of load this brain,  
 Though the hived thoughts must bring away, with  
     strength, 2725  
 What words and weakness, strength's receptacle—  
 Wax from the store ! Yet,—aching soothed away,—  
 Accept the compound ! No suspected scent  
 But proves some rose was rifled, though its ghost  
 Scarce lingers with what promised musk and myrrh. 2730  
 No need of farther squeezing. What remains  
 Can only be Balaustion, just her speech.

Ah, but—because speech serves a purpose still !—

He ended with that flourish. I replied,

Fancy myself your Aristonumos ? 2735  
 Advise me, rather, to remain myself,  
 Balaustion,—mindful what mere mouse confronts  
 The forest-monarch Aristophanes !  
 I who, a woman, claim no quality  
 Beside the love of all things loveable 2740  
 Created by a power pre-eminent  
 In knowledge, as in love I stand perchance,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

—You, the consummately-creative ! How  
 Should I, then, dare deny submissive trust  
 To any process aiming at result 2745  
 Such as you say your songs are pregnant with ?  
 Result, all judge : means, let none scrutinize  
 Save those aware how glory best is gained  
 By daring means to end, ashamed of shame,  
 Constant in faith that only good works good, 2750  
 While evil yields no fruit but impotence !  
 Graced with such plain good, I accept the means.  
 Nay, if result itself in turn become  
 Means,—who shall say?—to ends still loftier yet,—  
 Though still the good prove hard to understand, 2755  
 The bad still seemingly predominate,—  
 Never may I forget which order bears  
 The burden, toils to win the great reward,  
 And finds, in failure, the grave punishment,  
 So, meantime, claims of me a faith I yield ! 2760  
 Moreover, a mere woman, I recoil  
 From what may prove man's-work permissible,  
 Imperative. Rough strokes surprise : what then ?  
 Some lusty armsweep needs must cause the crash  
 Of thorn and bramble, ere those shrubs, those  
     flowers, 2765  
 We fain would have earth yield exclusively,  
 Are sown, matured and garlanded for boys  
 And girls, who know not how the growth was  
     gained.  
 Finally, am I not a foreigner ?  
 No born and bred Athenian,—isled about, 2770  
 I scarce can drink, like you, at every breath,  
 Just some particular doctrine which may best  
 Explain the strange thing I revolt against—  
 How—by involvement, who may extricate?—  
 Religion perks up through impiety, 2775  
 Law leers with licence, folly wise-like frowns,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The seemly lurks inside the abominable.  
 But opposites,—each neutralizes each  
 Haply by mixture : what should promise death,  
 May haply give the good ingredient force, 2780  
 Disperse in fume the antagonistic ill.  
 This institution, therefore,—Comedy,—  
 By origin, a rite,—by exercise,  
 Proved an achievement tasking poet's power  
 To utmost, eking legislation out 2785  
 Beyond the legislator's faculty,  
 Playing the censor where the moralist  
 Declines his function, far too dignified  
 For dealing with minute absurdities :  
 By efficacy,—virtue's guard, the scourge 2790  
 Of vice, each folly's fly-flap, arm in aid  
 Of all that 's righteous, customary, sound  
 And wholesome; sanctioned therefore,—better say,  
 Prescribed for fit acceptance of this age  
 By, not alone the long recorded roll 2795  
 Of earlier triumphs but, success to-day—  
 (The multitude as prompt recipient still  
 Of good gay teaching from that monitor  
 They crowned this morning—Aristophanes—  
 As when Sousarion's car first traversed street) 2800  
 This product of Athenai—I dispute,  
 Impugn? There 's just one only circumstance  
 Explains that ! I, poor critic, see, hear, feel ;  
 But eyes, ears, senses prove me—foreigner !  
 Who shall gainsay that the raw new-come guest 2805  
 Blames oft, too sensitive? On every side  
 Of—larger than your stage—life's spectacle,  
 Convention here permits and there forbids  
 Impulse and action, nor alleges more  
 Than some mysterious "So do all, and so 2810  
 Does no one : " which the hasty stranger blames  
 Because, who bends the head unquestioning,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Transgresses, turns to wrong what else were right,  
 By failure of a reference to law  
 Beyond convention ; blames unjustly, too— 2815  
 As if, through that defect, all gained were lost  
 And slave-brand set on brow indelibly ;—  
 Blames unobservant or experienceless  
 That men, like trees, if stout and sound and sane,  
 Show stem no more affected at the root 2820  
 By bough's exceptional submissive dip  
 Of leaf and bell, light danced at end of spray  
 To windy fitfulness in wayward sport—  
 No more lie prostrate—than low files of flower  
 Which, when the blast goes by, unruffled raise 2825  
 Each head again o'er ruder meadow-wreck  
 Of thorn and thistle that refractory  
 Demurred to cower at passing wind's caprice.  
 Why shall not guest extend like charity,  
 Conceive how,—even when astounded most 2830  
 That natives seem to acquiesce in muck  
 Changed by prescription, they affirm, to gold,—  
 Such may still bring to test, still bear away  
 Safely and surely much of good and true  
 Though latent ore, themselves unspecked, un-  
 spoiled ? 2835  
 Fresh bathed i' the icebrook, any hand may pass  
 A placid moment through the lamp's fierce flame :  
 And who has read your Lemnians, seen The Hours,  
 Heard Female-Playhouse-seat-Preoccupants,  
 May feel no worse effect than, once a year, 2840  
 Those who leave decent vesture, dress in rags  
 And play the mendicant, conform thereby  
 To country's rite, and then, no beggar-taint  
 Retained, don vesture due next morrow-day.  
 What if I share the stranger's weakness then ? 2845  
 Well, could I also show his strength, his sense  
 Untutored, ay !—but then untampered with !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

I fancy, though the world seems old enough,  
 Though Hellas be the sole unbarbarous land,  
 Years may conduct to such extreme of age, 2850  
 And outside Hellas so isles new may lurk,  
 That haply,—when and where remain a dream !—  
 In fresh days when no Hellas fills the world,  
 In novel lands as strange where, all the same,  
 Their men and women yet behold, as we, 2855  
 Blue heaven, black earth, and love, hate, hope  
     and fear,  
 Over again, unhelped by Attiké—  
 Haply some philanthropic god steers bark,  
 Gift-laden, to the lonely ignorance  
 Islanded, say, where mist and snow mass hard 2860  
 To metal—ay, those Kassiterides !  
 Then asks : “ Ye apprehend the human form.  
 What of this statue, made to Pheidias’ mind,  
 This picture, as it pleased our Zeuxis paint ?  
 Ye too feel truth, love beauty : judge of these ! ” 2865  
 Such strangers may judge feebly, stranger-like :  
 “ Each hair too indistinct—for, see our own !  
 Hands, not skin-coloured as these hands we have,  
 And lo, the want of due decorum here !  
 A citizen, arrayed in civic garb, 2870  
 Just as he walked your streets apparently,  
 Yet wears no sword by side, adventures thus,  
 In thronged Athenai ! foolish painter’s-freak !  
 While here ’s his brother-sculptor found at fault  
 Still more egregiously, who shames the world, 2875  
 Shows wrestler, wrestling at the public games,  
 Atrociously exposed from head to foot !  
 Sure, the Immortal would impart at once  
 Our slow-stored knowledge, how small truths  
     suppressed  
 Conduce to the far greater truth’s display,— 2880  
 Would replace simple by instructed sense,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And teach them how Athenai first so tamed  
The natural fierceness that her progeny  
Discarded arms nor feared the beast in man :  
Wherefore at games, where earth's wise gratitude, 2885  
Proved by responsive culture, claimed the prize  
For man's mind, body, each in excellence,—  
When mind had bared itself, came body's turn,  
And only irreligion grudged the gods  
One naked glory of their master-work 2890  
Where all is glorious rightly understood,—  
The human frame ; enough that man mistakes :  
Let him not think the gods mistaken too !

But, peradventure, if the stranger's eye  
Detected . . . Ah, too high my fancy-flight ! 2895  
Pheidias, forgive, and Zeuxis bear with me—  
How on your faultless should I fasten fault  
Of my own framing, even ? Only say,—  
Suppose the impossible were realized,  
And some as patent incongruity, 2900  
Unseemliness,—of no more warrant, there  
And then, than now and here, whate'er the time  
And place,—I say, the Immortal—who can  
doubt ?—  
Would never shrink, but own “ The blot escaped  
Our artist : thus he shows humanity. ” 2905

May stranger tax one peccant part in thee,  
Poet, three-parts divine ? May I proceed ?

“ Comedy is prescription and a rite.”  
Since when ? No growth of the blind antique time,  
“ It rose in Attiké with liberty ; 2910  
When freedom falls, it too will fall.” Scarce so !  
Your games,—the Olympian, Zeus gave birth to  
these ;

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Your Pythian,—these were Phoibos' institute.  
 Isthmian, Nemeian,—Theseus, Herakles  
 Appointed each, the boys and barbers say ! 2915  
 Earth's day is growing late : where 's Comedy ?  
 "Oh, that commenced an agesince,—two, belike,—  
 In Megara, whence here they brought the thing !"  
 Or I misunderstand, or here 's the fact—  
 Your grandsire could recall that rustic song, 2920  
 How suchanone was thief, and miser such  
 And how,—immunity from chastisement  
 Once promised to bold singers of the same  
 By daylight on the drunkard's holiday,—  
 The clever fellow of the joyous troop 2925  
 Tried acting what before he sang about,  
 Acted and stole, or hoarded, acting too :  
 While his companions ranged a-row, closed up  
 For Choros,—bade the general rabblement  
 Sit, see, hear, laugh,—not join the dance them-  
     selves. 2930  
 Soon, the same clever fellow found a mate,  
 And these two did the whole stage-mimicking,  
 Still closer in approach to Tragedy,—  
 So led the way to Aristophanes,  
 Whose grandsire saw Sousarion, and whose sire— 2935  
 Chionides ; yourself wrote " Banqueters "  
 When Aischulos had made " Prometheus," nay,  
 All of the marvels ; Sophokles,—I 'll cite,  
 " Oidipous"—and Euripides—I bend  
 The head—" Medeia" henceforth awed the world ! 2940  
 " Banqueters," " Babylonians"—next come you !  
 Surely the great days that left Hellas free  
 Happened before such advent of huge help,  
 Eighty-years-late assistance ? Marathon,  
 Plataia, Salamis were fought, I think, 2945  
 Before new educators stood reproved,  
 Or foreign legates blushed, excepted to !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Where did the helpful rite pretend its rise?  
Did it break forth, as gifts divine are wont,  
Plainly authentic, incontestably  
Adequate to the helpful ordinance?  
Founts, dowered with virtue, pulse out pure from  
source;

'T is there we taste the god's benign intent:  
Not when,—fatigued away by journey, foul  
With brutish trampling,—crystal sinks to slime,  
And lymph forgets the first salubriousness.  
Sprang Comedy to light thus crystal-pure?  
"Nowise!" yourself protest with vehemence;  
"Gross, bestial, did the clowns' diversion break;  
Every successor paddled in the slush;  
Nay, my contemporaries one and all  
Gay played the mudlark till I joined their game;  
Then was I first to change buffoonery  
For wit, and stupid filth for cleanly sense,  
Transforming pointless joke to purpose fine,  
Transfusing rude enforcement of home-law—  
'Drop knave's-tricks, deal more neighbour-like,  
ye boors!'—

With such new glory of poetic breath  
As, lifting application far past use  
O' the present, launched it o'er men's lowly heads  
To future time, when high and low alike  
Are dead and done with, while my airy power  
Flies disengaged, as vapour from what stuff  
It—say not, dwelt in—fitlier, dallied with  
To forward work, which done,—deliverance  
brave,—  
It soars away, and mud subsides to dust.  
Say then, myself invented Comedy!"

So mouths full many a famed Parabasis!  
Agreed! No more, then, of prescriptive use,



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Authorization by antiquity, 2980  
 For what offends our judgment ! 'T is your work,  
 Performed your way : not work delivered you  
 Intact, intact producible in turn.  
 Everywhere have you altered old to new—  
 Your will, your warrant : therefore, work must stand 2985  
 Or stumble by intrinsic worth. What worth ?  
 Its aim and object ! Peace you advocate,  
 And war would fain abolish from the land :  
 Support religion, lash irreverence,  
 Yet laughingly administer rebuke 2990  
 To superstitious folly,—equal fault !  
 While innovating rashness, lust of change,  
 New laws, new habits, manners, men and things,  
 Make your main quarry,—“oldest” meaning  
     “best.”  
 You check the fretful litigation-itch, 2995  
 Withstand mob-rule, expose mob-flattery,  
 Punish mob-favourites ; most of all press hard  
 On sophists who assist the demagogue,  
 And poets their accomplices in crime.  
 Such your main quarry : by the way, you strike 3000  
 Ignobler game, mere miscreants, snob or scamp,  
 Cowardly, gluttonous, effeminate :  
 Still with a bolt to spare when dramatist  
 Proves haply unproficient in his art.  
 Such aims—alone, no matter for the means— 3005  
 Declare the unexampled excellence  
 Of their first author—Aristophanes !  
  
 Whereat—Euripides, oh, not thyself—  
 Augustlier than the need !—thy century  
 Of subjects dreamed and dared and done, before 3010  
 “Banqueters” gave dark earth enlightenment,  
 Or “Babylonians” played Prometheus here,—  
 These let me summon to defend thy cause !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Lo, as indignantly took life and shape  
 Labour by labour, all of Herakles,— 3015  
 Palpably fronting some o'erbold pretence  
 "Eurustheus slew the monsters, purged the world!"  
 So shall each poem pass you and imprint  
 Shame on the strange assurance. *You* praised  
 Peace?  
 Sing him full-face, Kresphontes! "Peace" the  
 theme? 3020  
 "Peace, in whom depths of wealth lie,—of the blest  
 Immortals beauteousest,—  
 Come! for the heart within me dies away,  
 So long dost thou delay!  
 O I have feared lest old age, much annoy, 3025  
 Conquer me, quite outstrip the tardy joy,  
 Thy gracious triumph-season I would see,  
 The song, the dance, the sport, profuse of crowns  
 to be.  
 But come! for my sake, goddess great and dear,  
 Come to the city here! 3030  
 Hateful Sedition drive thou from our homes,  
 With Her who madly roams  
 Rejoicing in the steel against the life  
 That 's whetted—banish Strife!"

Shall I proceed? No need of next and next! 3035  
 That were too easy, play so presses play,  
 Trooping tumultuous, each with instance apt,  
 Each eager to confute the idle boast.  
 What virtue but stands forth panegyryzed,  
 What vice, unburned by stigma, in the books 3040  
 Which bettered Hellas,—beyond graven gold  
 Or gem indenture, sung by Phoibos' self  
 And saved in Kunthia's mountain treasure-house—  
 Ere you, man, moralist, were youth or boy?  
 —Not praise which, in the proffer, mocks the praised 3045

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

By sly admixture of the blameworthy  
 And enforced coupling of base fellowship,—  
 Not blame which gloats the while it frowning laughs,  
 "Allow one glance on horrors—laughable!"—  
 This man's entire of heart and soul, discharged 3050  
 Its love or hate, each unalloyed by each,  
 On objects worthy either; earnestness,  
 Attribute him, and power! but novelty?  
 Nor his nor yours a doctrine—all the world's!  
 What man of full-grown sense and sanity 3055  
 Holds other than the truth,—wide Hellas  
 through,—

Though truth, he acts, discredit truth he holds?  
 What imbecile has dared to formulate  
 "Love war, hate peace, become a litigant!"—  
 And so preach on, reverse each rule of right 3060  
 Because he quarrels, combats, goes to law?  
 No, for his comment runs, with smile or sigh  
 According to heart's temper, "Peace were best,  
 Except occasions when we put aside  
 Peace, and bid all the blessings in her gift 3065  
 Quick join the crows, for sake of Marathon!"

"Nay," you reply; for one, whose mind withstands  
 His heart, and, loving peace, for conscience' sake  
 Wants war,—you find a crowd of hypocrites  
 Whose conscience means ambition, grudge and  
 greed. 3070

On such, reproof, sonorous doctrine, melts  
 Distilled like universal but thin dew  
 Which all too sparsely covers country: dear,  
 No doubt, to universal crop and clown,  
 Still, each bedewed keeps his own head-gear dry 3075  
 With upthrust *skiadeion*, shakes adroit  
 The droppings to his neighbour. No! collect  
 All of the moisture, leave unhurt the heads

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Which nowise need a washing, save and store  
 And dash the whole condensed to one fierce spout 3080  
 On some one evildoer, sheltered close,—  
 The fool supposed,—till you beat guard away,  
 And showed your audience, not that war was wrong,  
 But Lamachos absurd,—case, crests and all,—  
 Not that democracy was blind of choice, 3085  
 But Kleon and Huperbolos were shams :  
 Not superstition vile, but Nikias crazed,—  
 The concrete for the abstract ; that 's the way !  
 What matters Choros crying “ Hence, impure ! ”  
 You cried “ Aripkrades does thus and thus ! ” 3090  
 Now, earnestness seems never earnest more  
 Than when it dons for garb—indifference ;  
 So there 's much laughing : but, compensative,  
 When frowning follows laughter, then indeed  
 Scout innuendo, sarcasm, irony !— 3095  
 Wit's polished warfare glancing at first graze  
 From off hard headpiece, coarsely-coated brain  
 O' the commonalty—whom, unless you prick  
 To purpose, what avails that finer pates  
 Succumb to simple scratching ? Those—not  
 these— 3100  
 'T is Multitude, which, moved, fines Lamachos,  
 Banishes Kleon and burns Sokrates,  
 House over head, or, better, poisons him.  
 Therefore in dealing with King Multitude,  
 Club-drub the callous numskulls ! In and in 3105  
 Beat this essential consequential fact  
 That here they have a hater of the three,  
 Who hates in word, phrase, nickname, epithet  
 And illustration, beyond doubt at all !  
 And similarly, would you win assent 3110  
 To—Peace, suppose ? You tickle the tough hide  
 With good plain pleasure her concomitant—  
 And, past mistake again, exhibit Peace—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Peace, vintager and festive, cheesecake-time,  
Hare-slice-and-peasoup-season, household joy : 3115  
Theoria's beautiful belongings match  
Opора's lavish condescendings : brief,  
Since here the people are to judge, you press  
Such argument as people understand :  
If with exaggeration—what care you ? 3120

Have I misunderstood you in the main ?  
No ! then must answer be, such argument,  
Such policy, no matter what good love  
Or hate it help, in practice proves absurd,  
Useless and null : henceforward intercepts 3125  
Sober effective blow at what you blame,  
And renders nugatory rightful praise  
Of thing or person. The coarse brush has daubed—  
What room for the fine limner's pencil-mark ?  
Blame ? You curse, rather, till who blames must  
blush— 3130

Lean to apology or praise, more like !  
Does garment, simpered o'er as white, prove grey ?  
" Black, blacker than Acharnian charcoal, black  
Beyond Kimmerian, Stugian blackness black,"  
You bawl, till men sigh " nearer snowiness ! " 3135  
What follows ? What one faint-rewarding fall  
Of foe belaboured ne'er so lustily ?  
Laugh Lamachos from out the people's heart ?  
He died, commanding, " hero, " say yourself !  
Gibe Nikias into privacy ?—nay, shake 3140  
Kleon a little from his arrogance  
By cutting him to shoe-sole-shreds ? I think,  
He ruled his life long and, when time was ripe,  
Died fighting for amusement,—good tough hide !  
Sokrates still goes up and down the streets, 3145  
And Aristullos puts his speech in book,  
When both should be abolished long ago.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Nay, wretchedest of rags, Aripbrates—  
You have been fouling that redoubtable  
Harp-player, twenty years, with what effect? 3150  
Still he strums on, strums ever cheerily,  
And earns his wage,—“Who minds a joke?”  
men say.

No, friend! The statues stand—mudstained at  
most—

Titan or pygmy: what achieves their fall  
Will be, long after mud is flung and spent, 3155  
Some clear thin spirit-thrust of lightning—truth!

Your praise, then—honey-smearing helps your  
friend,  
More than blame's ordure-smirch hurts foe, per-  
haps?

Peace, now, misunderstood, ne'er prized enough,  
You have interpreted to ignorance 3160  
Till ignorance opes eye, bat-blind before,  
And for the first time knows Peace means the power  
On maw of pan-cake, cheese-cake, barley-cake,  
No stop nor stint to stuffing. While, in camp,  
Who fights chews rancid tunny, onions raw, 3165  
Peace sits at cosy feast with lamp and fire,  
Complaisant smooth-sleeked flute-girls giggling  
gay.

How thick and fast the snow falls, freezing War  
Who shrugs, campaigns it, and may break a shin  
Or twist an ankle! come, who hesitates 3170  
To give Peace, over War, the preference?  
Ah, friend—had this indubitable fact  
Haply occurred to poor Leonidas,  
How had he turned tail on Thermopulai!  
It cannot be that even his few wits 3175  
Were addled to the point that, so advised,  
Preposterous he had answered—“Cakes are prime,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Hearth-sides are snug, sleek dancing-girls have  
 worth,  
 And yet—for country's sake, to save our gods  
 Their temples, save our ancestors their tombs, 3180  
 Save wife and child and home and liberty,—  
 I would chew sliced-salt-fish, bear snow—nay,  
 starve,  
 If need were,—and by much prefer the choice !”  
 Why, friend, your genuine hero, all the while,  
 Has been—who served precisely for your butt— 3185  
 Kleonumos that, wise, cast shield away  
 On battle-ground ; cried “ Cake my buckler be,  
 Embossed with cream-clot ! peace, not war, I  
 choose,  
 Holding with Dikaiopolis !” Comedy  
 Shall triumph, Dikaiopolis win assent, 3190  
 When Miltiades shall next shirk Marathon,  
 Themistokles swap Salamis for—cake,  
 And Kimon grunt “ Peace, grant me dancing-  
 girls !”  
 But sooner, hardly ! twenty-five years since,  
 The war began,—such pleas for Peace have reached 3195  
 A reasonable age. The end shows all.  
 And so with all the rest you advocate !  
 “ Wise folk leave litigation ! ’ware the wasps !  
 Whoso loves law and lawyers, heliast-like,  
 Wants hemlock !” None shows that so funnily. 3200  
 But, once cure madness, how comports himself  
 Your sane exemplar, what ’s our gain thereby ?  
 Philokleon turns Bdelukleon ! just this change,—  
 New sanity gets straightway drunk as sow,  
 Cheats baker-wives, brawls, kicks, cuffs, curses folk, 3205  
 Parades a shameless flute-girl, bandies filth  
 With his own son who cured his father’s cold  
 By making him catch fever—funnily !  
 But as for curing love of lawsuits—faugh !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And how does new improve upon the old 3210  
 —Your boast—in even abusing? Rough, may be—  
 Still, honest was the old mode. “Call thief—thief!”  
 But never call thief even—murderer!  
 Much less call fop and fribble, worse one whit  
 Than fribble and fop! Spare neither! beat your  
     brains 3215  
 For adequate invective,—cut the life  
 Clean out each quality,—but load your lash  
 With no least lie, or we pluck scourge from hand!  
 Does poet want a whipping, write bad verse,  
 Inculcate foul deeds? There ’s the fault to flog! 3220  
 You vow “The rascal cannot read nor write,  
 Spends more in buying fish than Morsimos,  
 Somebody helps his Muse and courts his wife,  
 His uncle deals in crockery, and last,—  
 Himself ’s a stranger!” That ’s the cap and crown 3225  
 Of stinging-nettle, that ’s the master-stroke!  
 What poet-rival,—after “housebreaker,”  
 “Fish-gorging,” “midnight footpad” and so  
     forth,—  
 Proves not, beside, “a stranger”? Chased from  
     charge  
 To charge, and, lie by lie, laughed out of court,— 3230  
 Lo, wit’s sure refuge, satire’s grand resource—  
 All, from Kratinos downward—“strangers” they!  
 Pity the trick ’s too facile! None so raw  
 Among your playmates but have caught the ball  
 And sent it back as briskly to—yourself! 3235  
 You too, my Attic, are styled “stranger”—Rhodes,  
 Aigina, Lindos or Kameiros,—nay,  
 ’T was Egypt reared, if Eupolis be right,  
 Who wrote the comedy (Kratinos vows)  
 Kratinos helped a little! Kleon’s self 3240  
 Was nigh promoted Comic, when he haled  
 My poet into court, and o’er the coals



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Hauled and re-hauled "the stranger,—insolent,  
 Who brought out plays, usurped our privilege!"  
 Why must you Comics one and all take stand 3245  
 On lower ground than truth from first to last?  
 Why all agree to let folk disbelieve,  
 So laughter but reward a funny lie?  
 Repel such onslaughts—answer, sad and grave,  
 Your fancy-fleerings—who would stoop so low? 3250  
 Your own adherents whisper,—when disgust  
 Too menacingly thrills Logeion through  
 At—Perikles invents this present war  
 Because men robbed his mistress of three maids—  
 Or—Sokrates wants burning, house o'er head,— 3255  
 "What, so obtuse, not read between the lines?  
 Our poet means no mischief! All should know—  
 Ribaldry here implies a compliment!  
 He deals with things, not men,—his men are  
     things—  
 Each represents a class, plays figure-head 3260  
 And names the ship: no meaner than the first  
 Would serve; he styles a trireme 'Sokrates'—  
 Fears 'Sokrates' may prove unseaworthy  
 (That's merely—'Sophists are the bane of boys')  
 Rat-riddled ('they are capable of theft'), 3265  
 Rotten or whatsoe'er shows ship-disease,  
 ('They war with gods and worship whirligig').  
 You never took the joke for earnest? scarce  
 Supposed mere figure-head meant entire ship,  
 And Sokrates—the whole fraternity?" 3270

This then is Comedy, our sacred song,  
 Censor of vice, and virtue's guard as sure:  
 Manners-instructing, morals' stop-estray,  
 Which, born a twin with public liberty,  
 Thrives with its welfare, dwindles with its wane! 3275  
 Liberty? what so exquisitely framed

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And fitted to suck dry its life of life  
 To last faint fibre?—since that life is truth.  
 You who profess your indignation swells  
 At sophistry, when specious words confuse 3280  
 Deeds right and wrong, distinct before, you say—  
 (Though all that 's done is—dare veracity,  
 Show that the true conception of each deed  
 Affirmed, in vulgar parlance, “wrong” or “right,”  
 Proves to be neither, as the hasty hold, 3285  
 But, change your side, shoots light, where dark  
     alone  
 Was apprehended by the vulgar sense)  
 You who put sophistry to shame, and shout  
 “There 's but a single side to man and thing ;  
 A side so much more big than thing or man 3290  
 Possibly can be, that—believe 't is true?  
 Such were too marvellous simplicity !”—  
 Confess, those sophists whom yourself depict,  
 (—Abide by your own painting ! ) what they teach,  
 They wish at least their pupil to believe, 3295  
 And, what believe, to practise ! Did *you* wish  
 Hellas should haste, as taught, with torch in hand,  
 And fire the horrid Speculation-shop ?  
 Straight the shop's master rose and showed the mob  
 What man was your so monstrous Sokrates ; 3300  
 Himself received amusement, why not they ?  
 Just as did Kleon first play magistrate  
 And bid you put your birth in evidence—  
 Since no unbadged buffoon is licensed here  
 To shame us all when foreign guests may mock— 3305  
 Then,—birth established, fooling licensed you,—  
 He, duty done, resumed mere auditor,  
 Laughed with the loudest at his Lamia-shape,  
 Kukloboros-roaring, and the camel-rest.  
 Nay, Aristullos,—once your volley spent 3310  
 On the male-Kirké and her swinish crew,—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

PLATON,—so others call the youth we love,—  
 Sends your performance to the curious king—  
 “Do you desire to know Athenai’s knack  
 At turning seriousness to pleasantry? 3315  
 Read this! One Aristullos means myself.  
 The author is indeed a merry grig!”  
 Nay, it would seem as if yourself were bent  
 On laying down the law “Tell lies I must—  
 Aforethought and of purpose, no mistake!” 3320  
 When forth yourself step, tell us from the stage  
 “Here you behold the King of Comedy—  
 Me, who, the first, have purged my every piece  
 From each and all my predecessors’ filth,  
 Abjured those satyr-adjuncts sewn to bid 3325  
 The boys laugh, satyr-jokes whereof not one  
 Least sample but would make my hair turn grey  
 Beyond a twelvemonth’s ravage! I renounce  
 Mountebank-claptrap, such as firework-fizz  
 And torchflare, or else nuts and barleycorns 3330  
 Scattered among the crowd, to scramble for  
 And stop their mouths with; no such stuff shames  
 me!  
 Who,—what ’s more serious,—know both when  
 to strike  
 And when to stay my hand: once dead, my foe,  
 Why, done, my fighting! / attack a corpse? 3335  
 I spare the corpse-like even! punish age?  
 I pity from my soul that sad effete  
 Toothless old mumblor called Kratinos! once  
 My rival,—now, alack, the dotard slinks  
 Ragged and hungry to what hole ’s his home; 3340  
 Ay, slinks thro’ byways where no passenger  
 Flings him a bone to pick. You formerly  
 Adored the Muses’ darling: dotard now,  
 Why, he may starve! O mob most mutable!”  
 So you harangued in person; while,—to point 3345

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Precisely out, these were but lies you launched,  
 Prompt, a play followed primed with satyr-frisks,  
 No spice spared of the stomach-turning stew,  
 Full-fraught with torch-display, and barley-throw,  
 And Kleon, dead enough, bedaubed afresh ; 3350  
 While daft Kratinos—home to hole trudged he,  
 Wrung dry his wit to the last vinous dregs,  
 Decanted them to “ Bottle,”—beat, next year,—  
 “ Bottle ” and dregs—your best of “ Clouds ” and  
 dew !

Where, Comic King, may keenest eye detect 3355  
 Improvement on your predecessors' work  
 Except in lying more audaciously ?

Why—genius ! That 's the grandeur, that 's the  
 gold—

That 's *you*—superlatively true to touch—  
 Gold, leaf or lump—gold, anyhow the mass 3360  
 Takes manufacture and proves Pallas' casque  
 Or, at your choice, simply a cask to keep  
 Corruption from decay. Your rivals' hoard  
 May ooze forth, lacking such preservative :  
 Yours cannot—gold plays guardian far too well ! 3365  
 Genius, I call *you* : dross, your rivals share ;  
 Ay, share and share alike, too ! says the world,  
 However you pretend supremacy  
 In aught beside that gold, your very own.  
 Satire ? “ Kratinos for our satirist ! ” 3370  
 The world cries. Elegance ? “ Who elegant  
 As Eupolis ? ” resounds as noisily.  
 Artistic fancy ? Choros-creatures quaint ?  
 Magnes invented “ Birds ” and “ Frogs ” enough,  
 Archippos punned, Hegemon parodied, 3375  
 To heart's content, before you stepped on stage.  
 Moral invective ? Eupolis exposed  
 “ That prating beggar, he who stole the cup,”

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Before your "Clouds" rained grime on Sokrates ;  
 Nay, what beat "Clouds" but "Konnos," muck  
 for mud ? 3380  
 Courage ? How long before, well-masked, you  
 poured  
 Abuse on Eukrates and Lusikles,  
 Did Telekleides and Hermippos pelt  
 Their Perikles and Kimon ? standing forth,  
 Bareheaded, not safe crouched behind a name,— 3385  
 Philonides or else Kallistratos,  
 Put forth, when danger threatened,—mask for face,  
 To bear the brunt,—if blame fell, take the blame,—  
 If praise . . . why, frank laughed Aristophanes  
 "They write such rare stuff? No, I promise you!" 3390  
 Rather, I see all true improvements, made  
 Or making, go against you—tooth and nail  
 Contended with ; 't is still Moruchides,  
 'T is Euthumenes, Surakosios, nay,  
 Argurrhios and Kinesias,—common sense 3395  
 And public shame, these only cleanse your styel  
 Coerced, prohibited,—you grin and bear,  
 And, soon as may be, hug to heart again  
 The banished nastiness too dear to drop !  
 Krates could teach and practise festive song 3400  
 Yet scorn scurrility ; as gay and good,  
 Pherekrates could follow. *Who* loosed hold,  
 Must let fall rose-wreath, stoop to muck once more ?  
 Did your particular self advance in aught,  
 Task the sad genius—steady slave the while— 3405  
 To further—say, the patriotic aim ?  
 No, there 's deterioration manifest  
 Year by year, play by play ! survey them all,  
 From that boy's triumph when "Acharnes" dawned,  
 To "Thesmophoriazousai,"—this man's-shame ! 3410  
 There, truly, patriot zeal so prominent  
 Allowed friends' plea perhaps : the baser stuff

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Was but the nobler spirit's vehicle.  
 Who would imprison, unvolatilize  
 A violet's perfume, blends with fatty oils 3415  
 Essence too fugitive in flower alone ;  
 So, calling unguent—violet, call the play—  
 Obscenity impregnated with "Peace" !  
 But here 's the boy grown bald, and here 's the  
     play  
 With twenty years' experience: where 's one spice 3420  
 Of odour in the hog's-lard ? what pretends  
 To aught except a grease-pot's quality ?  
 Friend, sophist-hating ! know,—worst sophistry  
 Is when man's own soul plays its own self false,  
 Reasons a vice into a virtue, pleads 3425  
 "I detail sin to shame its author"—not  
 "I shame Ariphrades for sin's display" !  
 "I show Opora to commend Sweet Home"—  
 Not "I show Bacchis for the striplings' sake !"

Yet all the same—O genius and O gold— 3430  
 Had genius ne'er diverted gold from use  
 Worthy the temple, to do copper's work  
 And coat a swine's trough—which abundantly  
 Might furnish Phoibos' tripod, Pallas' throne !  
 Had you, I dream, discarding all the base, 3435  
 The brutish, spurned alone convention's watch  
 And ward against invading decency  
 Disguised as license, law in lawlessness,  
 And so, re-ordinating outworn rule,  
 Made Comedy and Tragedy combine, 3440  
 Prove some new Both-yet-neither, all one bard,  
 Euripides with Aristophanes  
 Coöperant ! this, reproducing Now  
 As that gave Then existence : Life to-day,  
 This, as that other—Life dead long ago ! 3445  
 The mob decrees such feat no crown, perchance,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

But—why call crowning the reward of quest?  
Tell him, my other poet,—where thou walk'st  
Some rarer world than e'er Ilissos washed!

But dream goes idly in the air. To earth! 3450  
Earth's question just amounts to—which succeeds,  
Which fails of two life-long antagonists?  
Suppose my charges all mistake! assume  
Your end, despite ambiguous means, the best—  
The only! you and he, a patriot-pair, 3455  
Have striven alike for one result—say, Peace!  
You spoke your best straight to the arbiters—  
Our people: have you made them end this war  
By dint of laughter and abuse and lies  
And postures of Opora? Sadly—No! 3460  
This war, despite your twenty-five years' work,  
May yet endure until Athenai falls,  
And freedom falls with her. So much for you!  
Now, the antagonist Euripides—  
Has he succeeded better? Who shall say? 3465  
He spoke quite o'er the heads of Kleon's crowd  
To a dim future, and if there he fail,  
Why, you are fellows in adversity.  
But that's unlike the fate of wise words launched  
By music on their voyage. Hail, Depart, 3470  
Arrive, Glad Welcome! Not my single wish—  
Yours also wafts the white sail on its way,  
Your nature too is kingly. All beside  
I call pretension—no true potentate,  
Whatever intermediary be crowned, 3475  
Zeus or Poseidon, where the vulgar sky  
Lacks not Triballo to complete the group.  
I recognize,—behind such phantom-crew,—  
Necessity, Creation, Poet's Power,  
Else never had I dared approach, appeal 3480  
To poetry, power, Aristophanes!

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

But I trust truth's inherent kingliness,  
Trust who, by reason of much truth, shall reign  
More or less royally—may prayer but push  
His sway past limit, purge the false from true ! 3485  
Nor, even so, had boldness nerved my tongue  
But that the other king stands suddenly,  
In all the grand investiture of death,  
Bowing your knee beside my lowly head—  
Equals one moment !

Now, arise and go ! 3490  
Both have done homage to Euripides !

Silence pursued the words : till he broke out—

“ Scarce so ! This constitutes, I may believe,  
Sufficient homage done by who defames  
Your poet's foe, since you account me such ; 3495  
But homage-proper,—pay it by defence  
Of him, direct defence and not oblique,  
Not by mere mild admonishment of me ! ”

Defence ? The best, the only ! I replied.  
A story goes—When Sophokles, last year, 3500  
Cited before tribunal by his son  
(A poet—to complete the parallel)  
Was certified unsound of intellect,  
And claimed as only fit for tutelage,  
Since old and doating and incompetent 3505  
To carry on this world's work,—the defence  
Consisted just in his reciting (calm  
As the verse bore, which sets our heart a-swell  
And voice a-heaving too tempestuously)  
That choros-chant “ The station of the steed, 3510  
Stranger ! thou comest to,—Kolonos white ! ”  
Then he looked round and all revolt was dead.



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

You know the one adventure of my life—  
What made Euripides Balaustion's friend.  
When I last saw him, as he bade farewell, 3515  
"I sang another 'Herakles,'" smiled he;  
"It gained no prize : your love be prize I gain !  
Take it—the tablets also where I traced  
The story first with stulos pendent still—  
Nay, the psalterion may complete the gift, 3520  
So, should you croon the ode bewailing Age,  
Yourself shall modulate—same notes, same  
strings—  
With the old friend who loved Balaustion once."  
There they lie ! When you broke our solitude,  
We were about to honour him once more 3525  
By reading the consummate Tragedy.  
Night is advanced ; I have small mind to sleep ;  
May I go on, and read,—so make defence,  
So test true godship ? You affirm, not I,  
—Beating the god, affords such test : *I* hold 3530  
That when rash hands but touch divinity,  
The chains drop off, the prison-walls dispart,  
And—fire—he fronts mad Pentheus ! Dare we  
try ?

Accordingly I read the perfect piece.

# HERAKLES

## AMPHITRUON

Zeus' Couchmate,—who of mortals knows not me, 3535  
Argive Amphitruon whom Alkaios sired  
Of old, as Perseus him, I—Herakles?  
My home, this Thebai where the earth-born spike  
Of Sown-ones burgeoned : Ares saved from these  
A handful of their seed that stocks to-day 3540  
With children's children Thebai, Kadmos built.  
Of these had Kreon birth, Menoikeus' child,  
King of the country,—Kreon that became  
The father of this woman, Megara,  
Whom, when time was, Kadmeians one and all 3545  
Pealed praise to, marriage-songs with fluted help,  
While to my dwelling that grand Herakles  
Bore her, his bride. But, leaving Thebes—where I  
Abode perforce—this Megara and those  
Her kinsmen, the desire possessed my son 3550  
Rather to dwell in Argos, that walled work,  
Kuklopiian city, which I fly, myself,  
Because I slew Elektruon. Seeking so  
To ease away my hardships and once more  
Inhabit his own land, for my return 3555  
Heavy the price he pays Eurustheus there—  
The letting in of light on this choked world !  
Either he promised, vanquished by the goad  
Of Heré, or because fate willed it thus.  
The other labours—why, he toiled them through ; 3560  
But for this last one—down by Tainaros,  
Its mouth, to Haides' realm descended he

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

To drag into the light the three-shaped hound  
 Of Hell : whence Herakles returns no more.  
 Now, there 's an old-world tale, Kadmeians have, 3565  
 How Dirké's husband was a Lukos once,  
 Holding the seven-towered city here in sway  
 Before they ruled the land, white-steeded pair,  
 The twins Amphion, Zethos, born to Zeus.  
 This Lukos' son,—named like his father too, 3570  
 No born Kadmeian but Euboia's gift,—  
 Comes and kills Kreon, lords it o'er the land,  
 Falling upon our town sedition-sick.  
 To us, akin to Kreon, just that bond  
 Becomes the worst of evils, seemingly ; 3575  
 For, since my son is in the earth's abysms,  
 This man of valour, Lukos, lord and king,  
 Seeks now to slay these sons of Herakles,  
 And slay his wife as well,—by murder thus  
 Thinking to stamp out murder,—slay too me, 3580  
 (If me 't is fit you count among men still,—  
 Useless old age) and all for fear lest these,  
 Grown men one day, exact due punishment  
 Of bloodshed and their mother's father's fate.  
 I therefore, since he leaves me in these domes, 3585  
 The children's household guardian,—left, when  
     earth's  
 Dark dread he underwent, that son of mine,—  
 I, with their mother, lest his boys should die,  
 Sit at this altar of the saviour Zeus  
 Which, glory of triumphant spear, he raised 3590  
 Conquering—my nobly-born !—the Minuai.  
 Here do we guard our station, destitute  
 Of all things, drink, food, raiment, on bare ground  
 Couched side by side : sealed out of house and  
     home  
 Sit we in a resourcelessness of help. 3595  
 Our friends—why, some are no true friends, I see !

## HERAKLES

The rest, that are true, want the means to aid.  
So operates in man adversity :  
Whereof may never anybody—no,  
Though half of him should really wish me well,— 3600  
Happen to taste ! a friend-test faultless, that !

### MEGARA

Old man, who erst didst raze the Taphian town,  
Illustriously, the army-leader, thou,  
Of speared Kadmeians—how gods play men false !  
I, now, missed nowise fortune in my sire, 3605  
Who, for his wealth, was boasted mighty once,  
Having supreme rule,—for the love of which  
Leap the long lances forth at favoured breasts,—  
And having children too : and me he gave  
Thy son, his house with that of Herakles 3610  
Uniting by the far-famed marriage-bed.  
And now these things are dead and flown away,  
While thou and I await our death, old man,  
These Herakleian boys too, whom—my chicks—  
I save beneath my wings like brooding bird. 3615  
But one or other falls to questioning  
“O mother,” cries he, “where in all the world  
Is father gone to? What’s he doing? when  
Will he come back?” At fault through tender  
years,  
They seek their sire. For me, I put them off, 3620  
Telling them stories ; at each creak of doors,  
All wonder “Does he come?”—and all a-foot  
Make for the fall before the parent knee.  
Now then, what hope, what method of escape  
Facilitatest thou?—for, thee, old man, 3625  
I look to,—since we may not leave by stealth  
The limits of the land, and guards, more strong  
Than we, are at the outlets : nor in friends  
Remain to us the hopes of safety more.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Therefore, whatever thy decision be, 3630  
Impart it for the common good of all !  
Lest now should prove the proper time to die,  
Though, being weak, we spin it out and live.

AMPHITRUON

Daughter, it scarce is easy, do one's best,  
To blurt out counsel, things at such a pass. 3635

MEGARA

You want some sorrow more, or so love life ?

AMPHITRUON

I both enjoy life, and love hopes beside.

MEGARA

And I ; but hope against hope—no, old man !

AMPHITRUON

In these delayings of an ill lurks cure.

MEGARA

But bitter is the meantime, and it bites. 3640

AMPHITRUON

O there may be a run before the wind  
From out these present ills, for me and thee,  
Daughter, and yet may come my son, thy spouse !  
But hush ! and from the children take away  
Their founts a-flow with tears, and talk them calm, 3645  
Steal them by stories—sad theft, all the same !  
For, human troubles—they grow weary too ;  
Neither the wind-blasts always have their strength  
Nor happy men keep happy to the end :  
Since all things change—their natures part in  
twain ; 3650

## HERAKLES

And that man 's bravest, therefore, who hopes on,  
Hopes ever : to despair is coward-like.

### CHOROS

These domes that overroof,  
This long-used couch, I come to, having made  
A staff my prop, that song may put to proof 3655  
The swan-like power, age-whitened,—poet's aid  
Of sobbed-forth dirges—words that stand aloof  
From action now : such am I—just a shade  
With night for all its face, a mere night-dream—  
And words that tremble too : howe'er they seem, 3660  
Devoted words, I deem.

O, of a father ye unfathered ones,  
O thou old man, and thou whose groaning stuns—  
Unhappy mother—only us above,  
Nor reaches him below in Haides' realm, thy love! 3665  
—(Faint not too soon, urge forward foot and  
limb

Way-weary, nor lose courage—as some horse  
Yoked to the car whose weight recoils on him  
Just at the rock-ridge that concludes his course!  
Take by the hand, the peplos, anyone 3670  
Whose foothold fails him, printless and fordone!  
Aged, assist along me aged too,  
Who,—mate with thee in toils when life was  
new,  
And shields and spears first made acquaintance-  
ship,—

Stood by thyself and proved no bastard-slip 3675  
Of fatherland when loftiest glory grew.)—  
See now, how like the sire's  
Each eyeball fiercely fires!  
What though ill-fortune have not left his race?  
Neither is gone the grand paternal grace! 3680

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Hellas ! O what—what combatants, destroyed  
In these, wilt thou one day seek—seek, and find  
all void !

Pause! for I see the ruler of this land,  
Lukos, now passing through the palace-gate.

LUKOS

The Herakleian couple—father, wife—  
 If needs I must, I question : “ must ” forsooth ?  
 Being your master—all I please, I ask.  
 To what time do you seek to spin out life ?  
 What hope, what help see, so as not to die ?  
 Is it you trust the sire of these, that ’ s sunk  
 In Haides, will return ? How past the pitch,  
 Suppose you have to die, you pile the woe—  
 Thou, casting, Hellas through, thy empty vaunts  
 As though Zeus helped thee to a god for son ;  
 And thou, that thou wast styled our bestman’s wife !  
 Where was the awful in his work wound up,  
 If he did quell and quench the marshy snake  
 Or the Nemeian monster whom he snared  
 And—says, by throttlings of his arm, he slew ?  
 With these do you outwrestle me ? Such feats  
 Shall save from death the sons of Herakles  
 Who got praise, being nought, for bravery  
 In wild-beast-battle, otherwise a blank ?  
 No man to throw on left arm buckler’s weight,  
 Not he, nor get in spear’s reach ! bow he bore—  
 True coward’s-weapon : shoot first and then fly !  
 No bow-and-arrow proves a man is brave,  
 But who keeps rank,—stands, one unwinking stare  
 As, ploughing up, the darts come,—brave is he.  
 My action has no impudence, old man !  
 Providence, rather : for I own I slew  
 Kreon, this woman’s sire, and have his seat.

## HERAKLES

Nowise I wish, then, to leave, these grown up,  
Avengers on me, payment for my deeds.

### AMPHITRUON

As to the part of Zeus in his own child, 3715  
Let Zeus defend that ! As to mine, 't is me  
The care concerns to show by argument  
The folly of this fellow,—Herakles,  
Whom I stand up for ! since to hear thee styled—  
Cowardly—that is unendurable. 3720  
First then, the infamous (for I account  
Amongst the words denied to human speech,  
Timidity ascribed thee, Herakles !)  
This I must put from thee, with gods in proof.  
Zeus' thunder I appeal to, those four steeds 3725  
Whereof he also was the charioteer  
When, having shot down the earth's Giant-  
growth—  
(Never shaft flew but found and fitted flank)  
Triumph he sang in common with the gods.  
The Kentaur-race, four footed insolence— 3730  
Go ask at Pholoé, vilest thou of kings,  
*Whom* they would pick out and pronounce bestman,  
If not my son, “ the seeming-brave,” say'st thou !  
But Dirphus, thy Abantid mother-town,  
Question her, and she would not praise, I think ! 3735  
For there's no spot, where having done some good,  
Thy country thou mightst call to witness worth.  
Now, that all-wise invention, archer's-gear,  
Thou blamest : hear my teaching and grow sage !  
A man in armour is his armour's slave, 3740  
And, mixed with rank and file that want to run,  
He dies because his neighbours have lost heart.  
Then, should he break his spear, no way remains  
Of warding death off,—gone that body-guard,  
His one and only ; while, whatever folk 3745



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Have the true bow-hand,—here 's the one main  
good,—

Though he have sent ten thousand shafts abroad,

Others remain wherewith the archer saves

His limbs and life, too,—stands afar and wards

Away from flesh the foe that vainly stares 3750

Hurt by the viewless arrow, while himself

Offers no full front to those opposite,

But keeps in thorough cover : there 's the point

That 's capital in combat—damage foe,

Yet keep a safe skin—foe not out of reach 3755

As you are ! Thus my words contrast with thine,

And such, in judging facts, our difference.

These children, now, why dost thou seek to slay ?

What have they done thee ? In a single point

I count thee wise—if, being base thyself, 3760

Thou dread'st the progeny of nobleness.

Yet this bears hard upon us, all the same,

If we must die—because of fear in thee—

A death 't were fit thou suffer at our hands,

Thy betters, did Zeus rightly judge us all. 3765

If therefore thou art bent on sceptre-sway,

Thyself, here—suffer us to leave the land,

Fugitives ! nothing do by violence,

Or violence thyself shalt undergo

When the gods' gale may chance to change for  
thee ! 3770

Alas, O land of Kadmos,—for 't is thee

I mean to close with, dealing out the due

Revilement,—in such sort dost thou defend

Herakles and his children ? Herakles

Who, coming, one to all the world, against 3775

The Minuai, fought them and left Thebes an eye

Unblinded henceforth to front freedom with !

Neither do I praise Hellas, nor shall brook

Ever to keep in silence that I count

## HERAKLES

Towards my son, craven of cravens—her 3780  
Whom it behoved go bring the young ones here  
Fire, spears, arms—in exchange for seas made safe,  
And cleansings of the land—his labour's price.  
But fire, spears, arms,—O children, neither Thebes  
Nor Hellas has them for you ! 'T is myself, 3785  
A feeble friend, ye look to : nothing now  
But a tongue's murmur, for the strength is gone  
We had once, and with age are limbs a-shake  
And force a-flicker ! Were I only young,  
Still with the mastery o'er bone and thew, 3790  
Grasping first spear that came, the yellow locks  
Of this insulter would I bloody so—  
Should send him skipping o'er the Atlantic bounds  
Out of my arm's reach through poltroonery !

### CHOROS

Have not the really good folk starting-points 3795  
For speech to purpose,—though rare talkers they?

### LUKOS

Say thou against us words thou towerest with !  
I, for thy words, will deal thee blows, their due.  
Go, some to Helikon, to Parnasos  
Some, and the clefts there ! Bid the woodmen fell 3800  
Oak-trunks, and, when the same are brought inside  
The city, pile the altar round with logs,  
Then fire it, burn the bodies of them all,  
That they may learn thereby, no dead man rules  
The land here, but 't is I, by acts like these ! 3805  
As for you, old sirs, who are set against  
My judgments, you shall groan for—not alone  
The Herakleian children, but the fate  
Of your own house beside, when faring ill  
By any chance : and you shall recollect 3810  
Slaves are you of a tyranny that 's mine !

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

## CHOROS

O progeny of earth,—whom Ares sowed  
When he laid waste the dragon's greedy jaw—  
Will ye not lift the staves, right-hand supports,  
And bloody this man's irreligious head? 3815  
Who, being no Kadmeian, rules,—the wretch,—  
Our easy youth : an interloper too !  
But not of me, at least, shalt thou enjoy  
Thy lordship ever ; nor my labour's fruit,—  
Handworked so hard for,—have! A curse with thee, 3820  
Whence thou didst come, there go and tyrannize !  
For never while I live shalt thou destroy  
The Herakleian children : not so deep  
Hides he below ground, leaving thee their lord !  
But we bear both of you in mind,—that thou, 3825  
The land's destroyer, dost possess the land,  
While he who saved it, loses every right.  
I play the busybody—for I serve  
My dead friends when they need friends' service  
most ?  
O right-hand, how thou yearnest to snatch spear 3830  
And serve indeed ! in weakness dies the wish,  
Or I had stayed thee calling me a slave,  
And nobly drawn my breath at home in Thebes  
Where thou exuldest !—city that 's insane,  
Sick through sedition and bad government, 3835  
Else never had she gained for master—thee !

## MEGARA

Old friends, I praise you : since a righteous wrath  
For friend's sake well becomes a friend. But no !  
On our account in anger with your lord,  
Suffer no injury ! Hear my advice, 3840  
Amphitruon, if I seem to speak aright.  
O yes, I love my children ! how not love

## HERAKLES

What I brought forth, what toiled for? and to die—

Sad I esteem too ; still, the fated way  
Who stiffens him against, that man I count 3845  
Poor creature ; us, who are of other mood,  
Since we must die, behoves us meet our death  
Not burnt to cinders, giving foes the laugh—  
To me, worse ill than dying, that ! We owe  
Our houses many a brave deed, now to pay. 3850  
Thee, indeed, gloriously men estimate  
For spear-work, so that unendurable  
Were it that thou shouldst die a death of shame.  
And for my glorious husband, where wants he  
A witness that he would not save his boys 3855  
If touched in their good fame thereby? Since birth  
Bears ill with baseness done for children's sake,  
My husband needs must be my pattern here.  
See now thy hope—how much I count thereon !  
Thou thinkest that thy son will come to light : 3860  
And, of the dead, who came from Haides back?  
But we with talk this man might mollify :  
Never ! Of all foes, fly the foolish one !  
Wise, well-bred people, make concession to !  
Sooner you meet respect by speaking soft. 3865  
Already it was in my mind—perchance  
We might beg off these children's banishment ;  
But even that is sad, involving them  
In safety, ay—and piteous poverty !  
Since the host's visage for the flying friend 3870  
Has, only one day, the sweet look, 't is said.  
Dare with us death, which waits thee, dared or no !  
We call on thine ancestral worth, old man !  
For who outlabours what the gods appoint  
Shows energy, but energy gone mad. 3875  
Since what must—none e'er makes what must  
not be.

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

## CHOROS

Had anyone, while yet my arms were strong,  
Been scorning thee, he easily had ceased.  
But we are nought, now; thine henceforth to see—  
Amphitruon, how to push aside these fates ! 3880

## AMPHITRUON

Nor cowardice nor a desire of life  
Stops me from dying : but I seek to save  
My son his children. Vain ! I set my heart,  
It seems, upon impossibility.  
See, it is ready for the sword, this throat 3885  
To pierce, divide, dash down from precipice !  
But one grace grant us, king, we supplicate !  
Slay me and this unhappy one before  
The children, lest we see them—impious sight !—  
Gasping the soul forth, calling all the while 3890  
On mother and on father's father ! Else,  
Do as thy heart inclines thee ! No resource  
Have we from death, and we resign ourselves.

## MEGARA

And I too supplicate : add grace to grace,  
And, though but one man, doubly serve us both ! 3895  
Let me bestow adornment of the dead  
Upon these children ! Throw the palace wide !  
For now we are shut out. Thence these shall share  
At least so much of wealth was once their sire's !

## LUKOS

These things shall be. Withdraw the bolts, I bid 3900  
My servants ! Enter and adorn yourselves !  
I grudge no peploi ; but when these ye wind  
About your bodies,—that adornment done,—  
Then I shall come and give you to the grave.

# HERAKLES

## MEGARA

O children, follow this unhappy foot, 3905  
Your mother's, into your ancestral home,  
Where others have the power, are lords in truth,  
Although the empty name is left us yet !

## AMPHITRUON

O Zeus, in vain I had thee marriage-mate,  
In vain I called thee father of my child ! 3910  
Thou wast less friendly far than thou didst seem.  
I, the mere man, o'ermatch in virtue thee  
The mighty god : for I have not betrayed  
The Herakleian children,—whereas thou  
Hadst wit enough to come clandestinely 3915  
Into the chamber, take what no man gave,  
Another's place ; and when it comes to help  
Thy loved ones, there thou lackest wit indeed !  
Thou art some stupid god or born unjust.

## CHOROS

Even a dirge, can Phoibos suit 3920  
In song to music jubilant  
For all its sorrow : making shoot  
His golden plectron o'er the lute,  
Melodious ministrant.  
And I, too, am of mind to raise, 3925  
Despite the imminence of doom,  
A song of joy, outpour my praise  
To him—what is it rumour says ?—  
Whether—now buried in the ghostly gloom  
Below ground,—he was child of Zeus indeed, 3930  
Or mere Amphitruon's mortal seed—  
To him I weave the wreath of song, his labour's  
    need.  
For, is my hero perished in the feat ?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The virtues of brave toils, in death complete,  
These save the dead in song,—their glory-garland  
meet !

3935

First, then, he made the wood  
Of Zeus a solitude,  
Slaying its lion-tenant ; and he spread  
The tawniness behind—his yellow head  
Enmuffled by the brute's, backed by that grin of  
dread.

3940

The mountain-roving savage Kentaur-race  
He strewed with deadly bow about their place,  
Slaying with winged shafts : Peneios knew,  
Beauteously-eddyng, and the long tracts too  
Of pasture trampled fruitless, and as well  
Those desolated haunts Mount Pelion under,  
And, grassy up to Homolé, each dell  
Whence, having filled their hands with pine-tree  
plunder,

3945

Horse-like was wont to prance from, and subdue  
The land of Thessaly, that bestial crew.

3950

The golden-headed spot-back'd stag he slew,  
That robber of the rustics : glorified  
Therewith the goddess who in hunter's pride  
Slaughters the game along Oinoé's side.

And, yoked abreast, he brought the chariot-breed  
To pace submissive to the bit, each steed

3955

That in the bloody cribs of Diomede  
Champed and, unbridled, hurried down that gore  
For grain, exultant the dread feast before—

Of man's flesh : hideous feeders they of yore !

3960

All as he crossed the Hebros' silver-flow  
Accomplished he such labour, toiling so

For Mukenaian tyrant ; ay, and more—

He crossed the Melian shore

And, by the sources of Amauros, shot

3965

## HERAKLES

To death that strangers'-pest  
Kuknos, who dwelt in Amphanaia : not  
Of fame for good to guest !

And next, to the melodious maids he came,  
Inside the Hesperian court-yard : hand must aim 3970  
At plucking gold fruit from the appled leaves,  
Now he had killed the dragon, backed like flame,  
Who guards the unapproachable he weaves  
Himself all round, one spire about the same.  
And into those sea-troughs of ocean dived 3975  
The hero, and for mortals calm contrived,  
Whatever oars should follow in his wake.  
And under heaven's mid-seat his hands thrust he,  
At home with Atlas : and, for valour's sake,  
Held the gods up their star-faced mansionry. 3980  
Also, the rider-host of Amazons  
About Maiotis many-streamed, he went  
To conquer through the billowy Euxine once,  
Having collected what an armament  
Of friends from Hellas, all on conquest bent 3985  
Of that gold-garnished cloak, dread girdle-chase !  
So Hellas gained the girl's barbarian grace  
And at Mukenai saves the trophy still—  
Go wonder there, who will !

And the ten thousand-headed hound 3990  
Of many a murder, the Lernaian snake  
He burned out, head by head, and cast around  
His darts a poison thence,—darts soon to slake  
Their rage in that three-bodied herdsman's gore  
Of Erutheia. Many a running more 3995  
He made for triumph and felicity,  
And, last of toils, to Haides, never dry  
Of tears, he sailed : and there he, luckless, ends  
His life completely, nor returns again.



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The house and home are desolate of friends, 4000  
And where the children's life-path leads them, plain  
I see,—no step retraceable, no god  
Availing, and no law to help the lost !  
The oar of Charon marks their period,  
Waits to end all. Thy hands, these roofs accost !— 4005  
To thee, though absent, look their uttermost !

But if in youth and strength I flourished still,  
Still shook the spear in fight, did power match will  
In these Kadmeian co-mates of my age,  
They would,—and I,—when warfare was to wage, 4010  
Stand by these children ; but I am bereft  
Of youth now, lone of that good genius left !

But hist, desist ! for here come these,—  
Draped as the dead go, under and over,—  
Children long since,—now hard to discover,— 4015  
Of the once so potent Herakles !  
And the loved wife dragging, in one tether  
About her feet, the boys together ;  
And the hero's aged sire comes last !  
Unhappy that I am ! Of tears which rise,— 4020  
How am I all unable to hold fast,  
Longer, the aged fountains of these eyes !

### MEGARA

Be it so ! Who is priest, who butcher here  
Of these ill-fated ones, or stops the breath  
Of me, the miserable ? Ready, see, 4025  
The sacrifice—to lead where Haides lives !  
O children, we are led—no lovely team  
Of corpses—age, youth, motherhood, all mixed !  
O sad fate of myself and these my sons  
Whom with these eyes I look at, this last time ! 4030  
I, indeed, bore you : but for enemies

## HERAKLES

I brought you up to be a laughing-stock,  
Matter for merriment, destruction-stuff!

Woe 's me!

Strangely indeed my hopes have struck me down 4035

From what I used to hope about you once—

The expectation from your father's talk!

For thee, now, thy dead sire dealt Argos to :

Thou wast to have Eurustheus' house one day,  
And rule Pelasgia where the fine fruits grow ; 4040

And, for a stole of state, he wrapped about

Thy head with that the lion-monster bore,

That which himself went wearing armour-wise.

And thou wast King of Thebes—such chariots  
there!

Those plains I had for portion—all for thee, 4045

As thou hadst coaxed them out of who gave birth

To thee, his boy : and into thy right hand

He thrust the guardian-club of Daidalos,—

Poor guardian proves the gift that plays thee false!

And upon thee he promised to bestow 4050

Oichalia—what, with those far-shooting shafts,

He ravaged once ; and so, since three you were,

With threefold kingdoms did he build you up

To very towers, your father,—proud enough

Prognosticating, from your manliness 4055

In boyhood, what the manhood's self would be.

For my part, I was picking out for you

Brides, suiting each with his alliance—this

From Athens, this from Sparté, this from Thebes—

Whence, suited—as stern-cables steady ship— 4060

You might have hold on life gods bless. All gone!

Fortune turns round and gives us—you, the Fates

Instead of brides—me, tears for nuptial baths,

Unhappy in my hoping! And the sire

Of your sire—he prepares the marriage-feast 4065

Befitting Haides who plays father now—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Bitter relationship ! Oh me ! which first—  
Which last of you shall I to bosom fold ?  
To whom shall I fit close, his mouth to mine ?  
Of whom shall I lay hold and ne'er let go ? 4070  
How would I gather, like the brown-winged bee,  
The groans from all, and, gathered into one,  
Give them you back again, a crowded tear !  
Dearest, if any voice be heard of men  
Dungeoned in Haides, thee—to thee I speak ! 4075  
Here is thy father dying, and thy boys !  
And I too perish, famed as fortunate  
By mortals once, through thee ! Assist them !  
Come !  
But come ! though just a shade, appear to me !  
For, coming, thy ghost-grandeur would suffice, 4080  
Such cowards are they in thy presence, these  
Who kill thy children now thy back is turned !

### AMPHITRUON

Ay, daughter, bid the powers below assist !  
But I will rather, raising hand to heaven,  
Call thee to help, O Zeus, if thy intent 4085  
Be, to these children, helpful anyway,  
Since soon thou wilt be valueless enough !  
And yet thou hast been called and called ; in vain  
I labour : for we needs must die, it seems.  
Well, aged brothers—life 's a little thing ! 4090  
Such as it is, then, pass life pleasantly  
From day to night, nor once grieve all the while !  
Since Time concerns him not about our hopes,—  
To save them,—but his own work done, flies off.  
Witness myself, looked up to among men, 4095  
Doing noteworthy deeds : when here comes fate  
Lifts me away, like feather skyward borne,  
In one day ! Riches then and glory,—whom  
These are found constant to, I know not. Friends,

## HERAKLES

Farewell ! the man who loved you all so much, 4100  
Now, this last time, my mates, ye look upon !

MEGARA

Ha !  
O father, do I see my dearest ? Speak !

AMPHITRUON

No more than thou canst, daughter—dumb like  
thee !

MEGARA

Is this he whom we heard was under ground ? 4105

AMPHITRUON

Unless at least some dream in day we see !

MEGARA

What do I say ? what dreams insanely view ?  
This is no other than thy son, old sire !  
Here children ! hang to these paternal robes,  
Quick, haste, hold hard on him, since here's your  
true 4110  
Zeus that can save—and every whit as well !

HERAKLES

O hail, my palace, my hearth's propula,—  
How glad I see thee as I come to light !  
Ha, what means this ? My children I behold  
Before the house in garments of the grave, 4115  
Chapleted, and, amid a crowd of men,  
My very wife—my father weeping too,  
Whatever the misfortune ! Come, best take  
My station nearer these and learn it all !  
Wife, what new sorrow has approached our home ? 4120

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

MEGARA

O dearest ! light flashed on thy father now !  
Art thou come ? art thou saved and dost thou fall  
On friends in their supreme extremity ?

HERAKLES

How say'st thou ? Father ! what 's the trouble  
here ?

MEGARA

Undone are we !—but thou, old man, forgive  
If first I snatch what thou shouldst say to him ! 4125  
For somehow womanhood wakes pity more.  
Here are my children killed and I undone !

HERAKLES

Apollon, with what preludes speech begins !

MEGARA

Dead are my brothers and old father too. 4130

HERAKLES

How say'st thou ?—doing what ?—by spear-stroke  
whence ?

MEGARA

Lukos destroyed them—the land's noble king !

HERAKLES

Met them in arms ? or through the land's disease ?

MEGARA

Sedition : and he sways seven-gated Thebes.

HERAKLES

Why then came fear on the old man and thee ? 4135

# HERAKLES

MEGARA

He meant to kill thy father, me, our boys.

HERAKLES

How say'st thou? Fearing what from orphanage?

MEGARA

Lest they should some daypayback Kreon's death.

HERAKLES

And why trick out the boys corpse-fashion thus?

MEGARA

These wraps of death we have already donned. 4140

HERAKLES

And you had died through violence? Woe's me!

MEGARA

Left bare of friends: and thou wast dead, we heard.

HERAKLES

And whence came on you this faintheartedness?

MEGARA

The heralds of Eurustheus brought the news.

HERAKLES

And why was it you left my house and hearth? 4145

MEGARA

Forced thence; thy father—from his very couch!

HERAKLES

And no shame at insulting the old man?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

MEGARA

Shame, truly ! no near neighbours *he* and Shame !

HERAKLES

And so much, in my absence, lacked I friends ?

MEGARA

Friends,—are there any to a luckless man ? 4150

HERAKLES

The Minuai-war I waged,—they spat forth these ?

MEGARA

Friendless,—again I tell thee,—is ill-luck.

HERAKLES

Will not you cast these hell-wraps from your hair  
And look on light again, and with your eyes  
Taste the sweet change from nether dark to day ? 4155

While I—for now there needs my handiwork—  
First I shall go, demolish the abodes  
Of these new lordships ; next hew off the head  
Accurst and toss it for the dogs to trail.

Then, such of the Kadmeians as I find 4160  
Were craven though they owed me gratitude,—  
Some I intend to handle with this club  
Renowned for conquest ; and with winged shafts  
Scatter the others, fill Ismenos full

With bloody corpses,—Dirké's flow so white 4165  
Shall be incarnadined. For, whom, I pray,  
Behoves me rather help than wife and child  
And aged father ? Farewell, " Labours " mine !  
Vainly I wrought them : my true work lay here !  
My business is to die defending these,— 4170  
If for their father's sake they meant to die.

## HERAKLES

Or how shall we call brave the battling it  
With snake and lion, as Eurustheus bade,  
If yet I must not labour death away  
From my own children? "Conquering Herakles" 4175  
Folk will not call me as they used, I think!  
The right thing is for parents to assist  
Children, old age, the partner of the couch.

### AMPHITRUON

True, son! thy duty is—be friend to friends  
And foe to foes: yet—no more haste than needs! 4180

### HERAKLES

Why, father, what is over hasty here?

### AMPHITRUON

Many a pauper,—seeming to be rich,  
As the word goes,—the king calls partisan.  
Such made a riot, ruined Thebes to rob  
Their neighbour: for, what good they had at home 4185  
Was spent and gone—flew off through idleness.  
You came to trouble Thebes, they saw: since seen,  
Beware lest, raising foes, a multitude,  
You stumble where you apprehend no harm.

### HERAKLES

If all Thebes saw me, not a whit care I. 4190  
But seeing as I did a certain bird  
Not in the lucky seats, I knew some woe  
Was fallen upon the house: so, purposely,  
By stealth I made my way into the land.

### AMPHITRUON

And now, advancing, hail the hearth with praise 4195  
And give the ancestral home thine eye to see!  
For he himself will come, thy wife and sons



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

To drag-forth—slaughter—slay me too,—this king!

But, here remaining, all succeeds with thee—  
Gain lost by no false step. So, this thy town 4200  
Disturb not, son, ere thou right matters here!

HERAKLES

Thus will I do, for thou say'st well; my home  
Let me first enter! Since at the due time  
Returning from the unsunned depths where dwells  
Haides' wife Koré, let me not affront 4205  
Those gods beneath my roof I first should hail!

AMPHITRUON

For didst thou really visit Haides, son?

HERAKLES

Ay—dragged to light, too, his three-headed beast.

AMPHITRUON

By fight didst conquer, or through Koré's gift?

HERAKLES

Fight: well for me, I saw the Orgies first! 4210

AMPHITRUON

And is he in Eurustheus' house, the brute?

HERAKLES

Chthonia's grove, Hermion's city, hold him now.

AMPHITRUON

Does not Eurustheus know thee back on earth?

HERAKLES

No: I would come first and see matters here.

# HERAKLES

AMPHITRUON

But how wast thou below ground such a time ? 4215

HERAKLES

I stopped, from Haides, bringing Theseus up.

AMPHITRUON

And where is he ?—bound o'er the plain for home ?

HERAKLES

Gone glad to Athens—Haides' fugitive !  
But, up, boys ! follow father into house !  
There 's a far better going-in for you 4220  
Truly, than going-out was ! Nay, take heart,  
And let the eyes no longer run and run !  
And thou, O wife, my own, collect thy soul  
Nor tremble now ! Leave grasping, all of you,  
My garments ! I 'm not winged, nor fly from  
friends ! 4225

Ah,—

No letting go for these, who all the more  
Hang to my garments ! Did you foot indeed  
The razor's edge ? Why, then I 'll carry them—  
Take with my hands these small craft up, and  
tow 4230  
Just as a ship would. There ! don't fear I shirk  
My children's service ! this way, men are men,  
No difference ! best and worst, they love their  
boys

After one fashion : wealth they differ in—  
Some have it, others not ; but each and all 4235  
Combine to form the children-loving race.

CHOROS

Youth is a pleasant burthen to me ;  
But age on my head, more heavily

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Than the crags of Aitna, weighs and weighs,  
And darkening cloaks the lids and intercepts the  
rays.

4240

Never be mine the preference  
Of an Asian empire's wealth, nor yet  
Of a house all gold, to youth, to youth  
That 's beauty, whatever the gods dispense !  
Whether in wealth we joy, or fret  
Paupers,—of all God's gifts most beautiful, in truth !

4245

But miserable murderous age I hate !  
Let it go to wreck, the waves adown,  
Nor ever by rights plague tower or town  
Where mortals bide, but still elate  
With wings, on ether, precipitate,  
Wander them round—nor wait !

4250

But if the gods, to man's degree,  
Had wit and wisdom, they would bring  
Mankind a twofold youth, to be  
Their virtue's sign-mark, all should see,  
In those with whom life's winter thus grew  
spring.

4255

For when they died, into the sun once more  
Would they have traversed twice life's racecourse  
o'er ;

While ignobility had simply run  
Existence through, nor second life begun.  
And so might we discern both bad and good  
As surely as the starry multitude  
Is numbered by the sailors, one and one.

4260

But now the gods by no apparent line  
Limit the worthy and the base define ;  
Only, a certain period rounds, and so  
Brings man more wealth,—but youthful vigour,  
no !

4265

## HERAKLES

Well ! I am not to pause  
Mingling together—wine and wine in cup— 4270  
The Graces with the Muses up—  
Most dulcet marriage : loosed from music's laws,  
No life for me !

But where the wreaths abound, there ever may  
I be !

And still, an aged bard, I shout Mnemosuné— 4275  
Still chant of Herakles the triumph-chant,  
Companioned by the seven-stringed tortoise-shell  
And Libuan flute, and Bromios' self as well,  
God of the grape, with man participant !  
Not yet will we arrest their glad advance— 4280  
The Muses who so long have led me forth to  
dance !

A paian—hymn the Delian girls indeed,  
Weaving a beauteous measure in and out  
His temple-gates, Latona's goodly seed ;  
And paians—I too, these thy domes about, 4285  
From these grey cheeks, my king, will swan-like  
shout—

Old songster ! Ay, in song it starts off brave—  
“ Zeus' son is he ! ” and yet, such grace of birth  
Surpassing far, to man his labours gave  
Existence, one calm flow without a wave, 4290  
Having destroyed the beasts, the terrors of the  
earth.

## LUKOS

From out the house Amphitruon comes—in  
time !

For 't is a long while now since ye bedecked  
Your bodies with the dead-folk's finery.  
But quick ! the boys and wife of Herakles— 4295  
Bid them appear outside this house, keep pact  
To die, and need no bidding but your own !

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

AMPHITRUON

King ! you press hard on me sore-pressed enough,  
And give me scorn—beside my dead ones here.  
Meet in such matters were it, though you reign, 4300  
To temper zeal with moderation. Since  
You do impose on us the need to die—  
Needs must we love our lot, obey your will.

LUKOS

Where 's Megara, then ? Alkmené's grandsons,  
where ?

AMPHITRUON

She, I think,—as one figures from outside,— 4305

LUKOS

Well, this same thinking,—what affords its ground ?

AMPHITRUON

—Sits suppliant on the holy altar-steps,—

LUKOS

Idly indeed a suppliant to save life !

AMPHITRUON

—And calls on her dead husband, vainly too !

LUKOS

For he 's not come, nor ever will arrive. 4310

AMPHITRUON

Never—at least, if no god raise him up.

LUKOS

Go to her, and conduct her from the house !

# HERAKLES

AMPHITRUON

I should partake the murder, doing that.

LUKOS

We,—since thou hast a scruple in the case,—  
Outside of fears, we shall march forth these lads, 4315  
Mother and all. Here, follow me, my folk—  
And gladly so remove what stops our toils !

AMPHITRUON

Thou—go then ! March where needs must ! What  
remains—  
Perhaps concerns another. Doing ill,  
Expect some ill be done thee !

Ha, old friends ! 4320  
On he strides beautifully ! in the toils  
O' the net, where swords spring forth, will he be  
fast—  
Minded to kill his neighbours—the arch-knave !  
I go, too—I must see the falling corpse !  
For he has sweets to give—a dying man, 4325  
Your foe, that pays the price of deeds he did.

CHOROS

Troubles are over ! He the great king once  
Turns the point, tends for Haides, goal of life !  
O justice, and the gods' back-flowing fate !

AMPHITRUON

Thou art come, late indeed, where death pays  
crime— 4330  
These insults heaped on better than thyself !

CHOROS

Joy gives this outburst to my tears ! Again

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Come round those deeds, his doing, which of old  
He never dreamed himself was to endure—  
King of the country! But enough, old man! 4335  
Indoors, now, let us see how matters stand—  
If somebody be faring as I wish!

LUKOS

Ah me—me!

CHOROS

This strikes the keynote—music to my mind,  
Merry i' the household! Death takes up the tune! 4340  
The king gives voice, groans murder's prelude well!

LUKOS

O, all the land of Kadmos! slain by guile!

CHOROS

Ay, for who slew first? Paying back thy due,  
Resign thee! make, for deeds done, mere amends!  
Who was it grazed the gods through lawlessness— 4345  
Mortal himself, threw up his fool's-conceit  
Against the blessed heavenly ones—as though  
Gods had no power? Old friends, the impious man  
Exists not any more! The house is mute.  
Turn we to song and dance! For, those I love, 4350  
Those I wish well to, well fare they, to wish!

Dances, dances and banqueting  
To Thebes, the sacred city through,  
Are a care! for, change and change  
Of tears to laughter, old to new, 4355  
Our lays, glad birth, they bring, they bring!  
He is gone and past, the mighty king!  
And the old one reigns, returned—O strange!  
From the Acherontian harbour too!

## HERAKLES

Advent of hope, beyond thought's widest range ! 4360  
To the gods, the gods, are crimes a care,  
And they watch our virtue, well aware  
That gold and that prosperity drive man  
Out of his mind—those charioteers who hale  
Might-without-right behind them : face who can 4365  
Fortune's reverse which time prepares, nor quail ?  
—He who evades law and in lawlessness  
Delights him,—he has broken down his trust—  
The chariot, riches haled—now blackening in the  
dust !

Ismenos, go thou garlanded ! 4370  
Break into dance, ye ways, the polished bed  
O' the seven-gated city ! Dirké, thou  
Fair-flowing, with the Asopiad sisters all,  
Leave your sire's stream, attend the festival  
Of Herakles, one choir of nymphs, sing triumph now ! 4375  
O woody rock of Puthios and each home  
O' the Helikonian Muses, ye shall come  
With joyous shouting to my walls, my town  
Where saw the light that Spartan race, those  
“Sown,”

Brazen-shield-bearing chiefs, whereof the band 4380  
With children's children renovates our land,  
To Thebes a sacred light !  
O combination of the marriage rite—  
Bed of the mortal-born and Zeus, who couched  
Beside the nymph of Perseus' progeny ! 4385  
For credible, past hope, becomes to me  
That nuptial story long ago avouched,  
O Zeus ! and time has turned the dark to bright,  
And made one blaze of truth the Herakleidan  
might—

His, who emerged from earth's pavilion, left 4390  
Plouton's abode, the nether palace-cleft.



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Thou wast the lord that nature gave me—not  
That baseness born and bred—my king, by lot !  
—Baseness made plain to all, who now regard  
The match of sword with sword in fight,— 4395  
If to the gods the Just and Right  
Still pleasing be, still claim the palm's award.

Horror !  
Are we come to the self-same passion of fear,  
Old friends?—such a phantasm fronts me here 4400  
Visible over the palace-roof !  
In flight, in flight, the laggard limb  
Bestir ! and haste aloof  
From that on the roof there—grand and grim !  
O Paian, king ! 4405  
Be thou my safeguard from the woeful thing !

### IRIS

Courage, old men ! beholding here—Night's birth—  
Madness, and me the handmaid of the gods,  
Iris : since to your town we come, no plague—  
Wage war against the house of but one man 4410  
From Zeus and from Alkmené sprung, they say.  
Now, till he made an end of bitter toils,  
Fate kept him safe, nor did his father Zeus  
Let us once hurt him, Heré nor myself.  
But, since he has toiled through Eurustheus' task, 4415  
Heré desires to fix fresh blood on him—  
Slaying his children : I desire it too.

Up then, collecting the unsoftened heart,  
Unwedded virgin of black Night ! Drive, drag  
Frenzy upon the man here—whirls of brain 4420  
Big with child-murder, while his feet leap gay !  
Let go the bloody cable its whole length !  
So that,—when o'er the Acherousian ford

## HERAKLES

He has sent floating, by self-homicide,  
His beautiful boy-garland,—he may know 4425  
First, Heré's anger, what it is to him,  
And then learn mine. The gods are vile indeed  
And mortal matters vast, if he 'scape free !

### MADNESS

Certes, from well-born sire and mother too  
Had I my birth, whose blood is Night's and  
Heaven's ; 4430  
But here 's my glory,—not to grudge the good !  
Nor love I raids against the friends of man.  
I wish, then, to persuade,—before I see  
You stumbling, you and Heré ! trust my words !  
This man, the house of whom ye hound me to, 4435  
Is not unfamed on earth nor gods among ;  
Since, having quelled waste land and savage  
sea,  
He alone raised again the falling rights  
Of gods—gone ruinous through impious men.  
Desire no mighty mischief, I advise ! 4440

### IRIS

Give thou no thought to Heré's faulty schemes !

### MADNESS

Changing her step from faulty to fault-free !

### IRIS

Not to be wise, did Zeus' wife send thee here.

### MADNESS

Sun, thee I cite to witness—doing what I loathe  
to do !  
But since indeed to Heré and thyself I must  
subserve, 4445

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And follow you quick, with a whizz, as the hounds  
a-hunt with the huntsman,  
—Go I will! and neither the sea, as it groans  
with its waves so furiously,  
Nor earthquake, no, nor the bolt of thunder  
gasping out heaven's labour-throe,  
Shall cover the ground as I, at a bound, rush into  
the bosom of Herakles!

And home I scatter, and house I batter, 4450  
Having first of all made the children fall,—  
And he who felled them is never to know  
He gave birth to each child that received the blow,  
Till the Madness, I am, have let him go!

Ha, behold! already he rocks his head—he is off  
from the starting-place! 4455

Not a word, as he rolls his frightful orbs, from  
their sockets wrenched in the ghastly race!  
And the breathings of him he tempers and times  
no more than a bull in act to toss,  
And hideously he bellows invoking the Keres,  
daughters of Tartaros.

Ay, and I soon will dance thee madder, and pipe  
thee quite out of thy mind with fear!

So, up with the famous foot, thou Iris, march to  
Olympus, leave me here! 4460

Me and mine, who now combine, in the dreadful  
shape no mortal sees,  
And now are about to pass, from without, inside  
of the home of Herakles!

### CHOROS

Otototoi,—groan!

Away is mown

Thy flower, Zeus' offspring, City!

Unhappy Hellas, who dost cast (the pity!) 4465

## HERAKLES

Who worked thee all the good,  
Away from thee,—destroyest in a mood  
Of madness him, to death whom pipings dance !  
There goes she, in her chariot,—groans, her  
brood,— 4470  
And gives her team the goad, as though adrift  
For doom, Night's Gorgon, Madness, she whose  
glance  
Turns man to marble ! with what hissings lift  
Their hundred heads the snakes, her head's  
inheritance !  
Quick has the god changed fortune : through  
their sire 4475  
Quick will the children, that he saved, expire !  
O miserable me ! O Zeus ! thy child—  
Childless himself—soon vengeance, hunger-wild,  
Craving for punishment, will lay how low—  
Loaded with many a woe ! 4480  
O palace-roofs ! your courts about,  
A measure begins all unrejoiced  
By the tympanies and the thyrsos hoist  
Of the Bromian revel-rout !  
O ye domes ! and the measure proceeds 4485  
For blood, not such as the cluster bleeds  
Of the Dionusian pouring-out !  
Break forth, fly, children ! fatal this—  
Fatal the lay that is piped, I wis !  
Ay, for he hunts a children-chase— 4490  
Never shall Madness lead her revel  
And leave no trace in the dwelling-place !  
Ai ai, because of the evil !  
Ai ai, the old man—how I groan  
For the father, and not the father alone ! 4495  
She who was nurse of his children,—small  
Her gain that they ever were born at all !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

See! See!

A whirlwind shakes hither and thither

The house—the roof falls in together!

4500

Ha, ha, what dost thou, son of Zeus?

A trouble of Tartaros broke loose,

Such as once Pallas on the Titan thundered,

Thou sendest on thy domes, roof-shattered and  
wall-sundered!

MESSENGER

O bodies white with age!—

CHOROS

What cry, to me— 4505

*What*, dost thou call with?

MESSENGER

There 's a curse indoors.

CHOROS

I shall not bring a prophet: you suffice.

MESSENGER

Dead are the children.

CHOROS

Ai ai!

MESSENGER

Groan! for, groans

Suit well the subject. Dire the children's death,

Dire too the parent's hands that dealt the fate.

4510

No one could tell worse woe than we have borne.

CHOROS

How dost thou that same curse—curse, cause for  
groan—

The father's on the children, make appear?

## HERAKLES

Tell in what matter they were hurled from heaven  
Against the house—these evils ; and recount 4515  
The children's hapless fate, O Messenger !

### MESSENGER

The victims were before the hearth of Zeus,  
A household-expiation : since the king  
O' the country, Herakles had killed and cast  
From out the dwelling ; and a beauteous choir 4520  
Of boys stood by his sire, too, and his wife.  
And now the basket had been carried round  
The altar in a circle, and we used  
The consecrated speech. Alkmené's son,—  
Just as he was about, in his right hand, 4525  
To bear the torch, that he might dip into  
The cleansing-water,—came to a stand-still ;  
And, as their father yet delayed, his boys  
Had their eyes on him. But he was himself  
No longer : lost in rollings of the eyes ; 4530  
Outthrusting eyes—their very roots—like blood !  
Froth he dropped down his bushy-bearded cheek,  
And said—together with a madman's laugh—  
“ Father ! why sacrifice, before I slay  
Eurustheus ? why have twice the lustral fire, 4535  
And double pains, when 't is permitted me  
To end, with one good hand-sweep, matters here ?  
Then,—when I hither bring Eurustheus' head,—  
Then for these just slain, wash hands once for all !  
Now,—cast drink-offerings forth, throw baskets  
down ! 4540  
Who gives me bow and arrows, who my club ?  
I go to that Mukenai. One must match  
Crowbars and mattocks, so that—those sunk stones  
The Kuklops squared with picks and plumb-line  
red—  
I, with my bent steel, may o'ertumble town.” 4545

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Which said, he goes and—with no car to have—  
Affirms he has one ! mounts the chariot-board,  
And strikes, as having really goad in hand !  
And two ways laughed the servants—laugh with  
awe ;

And one said, as each met the other's stare, 4550  
“ Playing us boys' tricks ? or is master mad ? ”

But up he climbs, and down along the roof,  
And, dropping into the men's place, maintains  
He 's come to Nisos city, when he 's come  
Only inside his own house ! then reclines 4555  
On floor, for couch, and, as arrived indeed,  
Makes himself supper ; goes through some brief  
stay,

Then says he 's traversing the forest-flats  
Of Isthmos ; thereupon lays body bare  
Of bucklings, and begins a contest with 4560

—No one ! and is proclaimed the conqueror—  
He by himself—having called out to hear  
—Nobody ! Then, if you will take his word,  
Blaring against Eurustheus horribly,  
He 's at Mukenai. But his father laid 4565

Hold of the strong hand and addressed him thus :  
“ O son, what ails thee ? Of what sort is this  
Extravagance ? Has not some murder-craze,  
Bred of those corpses thou didst just despatch,  
Danced thee drunk ? ” But he,—taking him to  
crouch, 4570

Eurustheus' sire, that apprehensive touched  
His hand, a suppliant,—pushes him aside,  
Gets ready quiver, and bends bow against  
His children—thinking them Eurustheus' boys  
He means to slay. They, horrified with fear, 4575  
Rushed here and there,—this child, into the robes  
O' the wretched mother—this, beneath the shade  
O' the column,—and this other, like a bird,

## HERAKLES

Cowered at the altar-foot. The mother shrieks  
 "Parent—what dost thou?—kill thy children?" So 4580  
 Shriek the old sire and crowd of servitors.  
 But he, outwinding him, as round about  
 The column ran the boy,—a horrid whirl  
 O' the lathe his foot described !—stands opposite,  
 Strikes through the liver ; and supine the boy 4585  
 Bedews the stone shafts, breathing out his life.  
 But "Victory !" he shouted—boasted thus :  
 "Well, this one nestling of Eurustheus—dead—  
 Falls by me, pays back the paternal hate !"

Then bends bow on another who was crouched 4590  
 At base of altar—overlooked, he thought—  
 And now prevents him, falls at father's knee,  
 Throwing up hand to beard and cheek above.  
 "O dearest !" cries he ; "father, kill me not !  
 Yours I am—your boy : not Eurustheus' boy 4595  
 You kill now !" But he, rolling the wild eye  
 Of Gorgon,—as the boy stood all too close  
 For deadly bowshot,—mimicry of smith  
 Who batters red-hot iron,—hand o'er head  
 Heaving his club, on the boy's yellow hair 4600  
 Hurls it and breaks the bone. This second caught,—  
 He goes, would slay the third, one sacrifice  
 He and the couple ; but, beforehand here,  
 The miserable mother catches up,  
 Carries him inside house and bars the gate. 4605  
 Then he, as he were at those Kuklops' work,  
 Digs at, heaves doors up, wrenches doorposts out,  
 Lays wife and child low with the selfsame shaft.  
 And this done, at the old man's death he drives ;  
 But there came, as it seemed to us who saw, 4610  
 A statue—Pallas with the crested head,  
 Swinging her spear—and threw a stone which smote  
 Herakles' breast and stayed his slaughter-rage,  
 And sent him safe to sleep. He falls to ground—



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Striking against the column with his back— 4615  
Column which, with the falling of the roof,  
Broken in two, lay by the altar-base.  
And we, foot-free now from our several flights,  
Along with the old man, we fastened bonds  
Of rope-noose to the column, so that he, 4620  
Ceasing from sleep, might not go adding deeds  
To deeds done. And he sleeps a sleep, poor  
wretch,  
No gift of any god ! since he has slain  
Children and wife. For me, I do not know  
What mortal has more misery to bear. 4625

### CHOROS

A murder there was which Argolis  
Holds in remembrance, Hellas through,  
As, at that time, best and famous :  
Of those, the daughters of Danaos slew.  
A murder indeed was that ! but this 4630  
Outstrips it, straight to the goal has pressed.  
I am able to speak of a murder done  
To the hapless Zeus-born offspring, too—  
Prokné's son, who had but one—  
Or a sacrifice to the Muses, say 4635  
Rather, who Itus sing alway,  
Her single child. But thou, the sire  
Of children three—O thou consuming fire !—  
In one outrageous fate hast made them all expire.  
And this outrageous fate— 4640  
What groan, or wail, or deadmen's dirge,  
Or choric dance of Haides shall I urge  
The Muse to celebrate ?

Woe ! woe ! behold !  
The portalled palace lies unrolled, 4645  
This way and that way, each prodigious fold !

## HERAKLES

Alas for me ! these children, see,  
Stretched, hapless group, before their father—he  
The all-unhappy, who lies sleeping out  
The murder of his sons, a dreadful sleep ! 4650  
And bonds, see, all about,—  
Rope-tangle, ties and tether,—these  
Tightenings around the body of Herakles  
To the stone columns of the house made fast !

But—like a bird that grieves 4655  
For callow nestlings some rude hand bereaves—  
See, here, a bitter journey overpast,  
The old man—all too late—is here at last !

### AMPHITRUON

Silently, silently, aged Kadmeians !  
Will ye not suffer my son, diffused 4660  
Yonder, to slide from his sorrows in sleep ?

### CHOROS

And thee, old man, do I, groaning, weep,  
And the children too, and the head there—  
used  
Of old to the wreaths and paians !

### AMPHITRUON

Farther away ! Nor beat the breast, 4665  
Nor wail aloud, nor rouse from rest  
The slumberer—asleep, so best !

### CHOROS

Ah me—what a slaughter !

### AMPHITRUON

Refrain—refrain !  
Ye will prove my perdition.

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

CHOROS

Unlike water,  
Bloodshed rises from earth again.

4670

AMPHITRUON

Do I bid you bate your breath, in vain—  
Ye elders? Lament in a softer strain!  
Lest he rouse himself, burst every chain,  
And bury the city in ravage—bray  
Father and house to dust away!

4675

CHOROS

I cannot forbear—I cannot forbear!

AMPHITRUON

Hush! I will learn his breathings: there!  
I will lay my ears close.

CHOROS

What, he sleeps?

AMPHITRUON

Ay,—sleeps! A horror of slumber keeps  
The man who has piled  
On wife and child  
Death and death, as he shot them down  
With clang o' the bow.

4680

CHOROS

Wail—

AMPHITRUON

Even so!

CHOROS

—The fate of the children—

# HERAKLES

AMPHITRUON

Triple woe !

CHOROS

—Old man, the fate of thy son !

4685

AMPHITRUON

Hush, hush ! Have done !

He is turning about !

He is breaking out !

Away ! I steal

And my body conceal,

4690

Before he arouse,

In the depths of the house.

CHOROS

Courage ! The Night

Maintains her right

On the lids of thy son there, sealed from sight !

4695

AMPHITRUON

See, see ! To leave the light

And, wretch that I am, bear one last ill,

I do not avoid ; but if he kill

Me his own father, and devise

Beyond the present miseries

4700

A misery more ghastly still—

And to haunt him, over and above

Those here who, as they used to love,

Now hate him, what if he have with these

My murder, the worst of Erinues ?

4705

CHOROS

Then was the time to die, for thee,

When ready to wreak in the full degree

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Vengeance on those  
Thy consort's foes  
Who murdered her brothers ! glad, life's close, 4710  
With the Taphioi down,  
And sacked their town  
Clustered about with a wash of sea !

### AMPHITRUON

To flight—to flight !  
Away from the house, troop off, old men ! 4715  
Save yourselves out of the maniac's sight !  
He is rousing himself right up : and then,  
Murder on murder heaping anew,  
He will revel in blood your city through !

### CHOROS

O Zeus, why hast, with such unmeasured hate, 4720  
Hated thy son, whelmed in this sea of woes ?

### HERAKLES

Ha,—  
In breath indeed I am—see things I ought—  
Æther, and earth, and these the sunbeam-shafts !  
But then—some billow and strange whirl of sense 4725  
I have fallen into ! and breathings hot I breathe—  
Smoked upwards, not the steady work from lungs.  
See now ! Whybound,—at moorings like a ship,—  
About my young breast and young arm, to this  
Stone piece of carved work broke in half, do I 4730  
Sit, have my rest in corpses' neighbourhood ?  
Strewn on the ground are winged darts, and bow  
Which played my brother-shieldman, held in  
hand,—  
Guarded my side, and got my guardianship !  
I cannot have gone back to Haides—twice 4735  
Begun Eurustheus' race I ended thence ?

## HERAKLES

But I nor see the Sisupheian stone,  
Nor Plouton, nor Demeter's sceptred maid !  
I am struck witless sure ! Where can I be ?  
Ho there ! what friend of mine is near or far— 4740  
Some one to cure me of bewilderment ?  
For nought familiar do I recognize.

AMPHITRUON

Old friends, shall I go close to these my woes ?

CHOROS

Ay, and let me too,—nor desert your ills !

HERAKLES

Father, why weepest thou, and buriest up 4745  
Thine eyes, aloof so from thy much-loved son ?

AMPHITRUON

O child !—for, faring badly, mine thou art !

HERAKLES

Do I fare somehow ill, that tears should flow ?

AMPHITRUON

Ill,—would cause any god who bore, to groan !

HERAKLES

That's boasting, truly ! still, you state no hap. 4750

AMPHITRUON

For, thyself seest—if in thy wits again.

HERAKLES

Heyday ! How riddlingly that hint returns !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

AMPHITRUON

Well, I am trying—art thou sane and sound !

HERAKLES

Say if thou lay'st aught strange to my life's charge !

AMPHITRUON

If thou no more art Haides-drunk,—I tell !

4755

HERAKLES

I bring to mind no drunkenness of soul.

AMPHITRUON

Shall I unbind my son, old men, or what ?

HERAKLES

And who was binder, tell !—not *that*, my deed !

AMPHITRUON

Mind that much of misfortune—pass the rest !

HERAKLES

Enough ! from silence, I nor learn nor wish.

4760

AMPHITRUON

O Zeus, dost witness here throned Heré's work ?

HERAKLES

But have I had to bear aught hostile thence ?

AMPHITRUON

Let be the goddess—bury thine own guilt !

HERAKLES

Undone ! What is the sorrow thou wilt say ?

## HERAKLES

AMPHITRUON

Look ! See the ruins of thy children here !

4765

HERAKLES

Ah me ! What sight do wretched I behold ?

AMPHITRUON

Unfair fight, son, this fight thou fastenedst  
On thine own children !

HERAKLES

What fight ? Who slew these ?

AMPHITRUON

Thou and thy bow, and who of gods was cause.

HERAKLES

How say'st ? What did I ? Ill-announcing sire !

4770

AMPHITRUON

—Go mad ! Thou askest a sad clearing up.

HERAKLES

And am I also murderer of my wife ?

AMPHITRUON

All the work here was just one hand's work—thine !

HERAKLES

Ai ai—for groans encompass me—a cloud !

AMPHITRUON

For these deeds' sake do I begroan thy fate.

4775

HERAKLES

Did I break up my house or dance it down ?



# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

AMPHITRUON

I know just one thing—all 's a woe with thee.

HERAKLES

But where did the craze catch me? where destroy?

AMPHITRUON

When thou didst cleanse hands at the altar-flame.

HERAKLES

Ah me! why is it then I save my life—  
Proved murderer of my dearest ones, my boys? 4780  
Shall not I rush to the rock-level's leap,  
Or, darting sword through breast and all, become  
My children's blood-avenger? or, this flesh  
Burning away with fire, so thrust away 4785  
The infamy, which waits me there, from life?

Ah but,—a hindrance to my purposed death,  
Theseus arrives, my friend and kinsman, here!  
Eyes will be on me! my child-murder-plague  
In evidence before friends loved so much! 4790  
O me, what shall I do? Where, taking wing  
Or gliding underground, shall I seek out  
A solitariness from misery?  
I will pull night upon my muffled head!  
Let this wretch here content him with his curse 4795  
Of blood: I would pollute no innocents.

THESEUS

I come,—with others who await beside  
Asopos' stream, the armed Athenian youth,—  
Bring thy son, old man, spear's fight-fellowship!  
For a bruit reached the Erechtheidai's town 4800  
That, having seized the sceptre of this realm,  
Lukos prepares you battle-violence.

## HERAKLES

So, paying good back,—Herakles began,  
Saving me down there,—I have come, old man,  
If aught, of my hand or my friends', you want. 4805  
What 's here? Why all these corpses on the  
ground?

Am I perhaps behindhand—come too late  
For newer ill? Who killed these children  
now?

Whose wife was she, this woman I behold?  
Boys, at least, take no stand in reach of spear! 4810  
Some other woe than war, I chance upon.

AMPHITRUON

O thou, who sway'st the olive-bearing height!—

THESEUS

Why hail'st thou me with woeful prelude thus?

AMPHITRUON

Dire sufferings have we suffered from the gods.

THESEUS

These boys,—who are they thou art weeping o'er? 4815

AMPHITRUON

He gave them birth, indeed, my hapless son!  
Begot, but killed them—dared their bloody death.

THESEUS

Speak no such horror!

AMPHITRUON

Would I might obey!

THESEUS

O teller of dread tidings!

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

AMPHITRUON

Lost are we—

Lost—flown away from life !

THESEUS

What sayest thou ? 4820

What did he ?

AMPHITRUON

Erring through a frenzy-fit,  
He did all, with the arrows dipt in dye  
Of hundred-headed Hudra.

THESEUS

Heré's strife !

But who is this among the dead, old man ?

AMPHITRUON

Mine, mine, this progeny—the labour-plagued, 4825  
Who went with gods once to Phlegruia's plain,  
And in the giant-slaying war bore shield.

THESEUS

Woe—woe ! What man was born mischanceful  
thus !

AMPHITRUON

Thou couldst not know another mortal man  
Toil-weary, more outworn by wanderings. 4830

THESEUS

And why i' the peploi hides he his sad head ?

AMPHITRUON

Not daring meet thine eye, thy friendliness  
And kinship,—nor that children's-blood about.

# HERAKLES

THESEUS

But *I* come to who shared my woe with me !  
Uncover him !

AMPHITRUON

O child, put from thine eyes 4835  
The peplos, throw it off, show face to sun !  
Woe's weight well matched contends with tears  
in thee.  
I supplicate thee, falling at thy cheek  
And knee and hand, and shedding this old tear !  
O son, remit the savage lion's mood, 4840  
Since to a bloody, an unholy race  
Art thou led forth, if thou be resolute  
To go on adding ill to ill, my child !

THESEUS

Let me speak ! Thee, who sittest—seated woe—  
I call upon to show thy friends thine eye ! 4845  
For there 's no darkness has a cloud so black  
May hide thy misery thus absolute.  
Why, waving hand, dost sign me—murder 's done?  
Lest a pollution strike me, from thy speech ?  
Nought care I to—with thee, at least—fare ill : 4850  
For I had joy once ! *Then*,—soul rises to,—  
When thou didst save me from the dead to light !  
Friends' gratitude that tastes old age, I loathe,  
And him who likes to share when things look fine,  
But, sail along with friends in trouble—no ! 4855  
Arise, uncover thine unhappy head !  
Look on us ! Every man of the right race  
Bears what, at least, the gods inflict, nor shrinks.

HERAKLES

Theseus, hast seen this match—my boys with me ?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

THESEUS

I heard of, now I see the ills thou sign'st. 4860

HERAKLES

Why then hast thou displayed my head to sun?

THESEUS

Why? mortals bring no plague on aught divine.

HERAKLES

Fly, O unhappy, this my impious plague!

THESEUS

No plague of vengeance flits to friends from friends.

HERAKLES

I praise thee. But I helped thee,—that is truth. 4865

THESEUS

And I, advantaged then, now pity thee.

HERAKLES

—The pitiable,—my children's murderer!

THESEUS

I mourn for thy sake, in this altered lot.

HERAKLES

Hast thou found others in still greater woe?

THESEUS

Thou, from earth, touchest heaven, one huge  
distress!

4870

HERAKLES

Accordingly, I am prepared to die.

## HERAKLES

THESEUS

Think'st thou thy threats at all import the gods?

HERAKLES

Gods please themselves : to gods I give their like.

THESEUS

Shut thy mouth, lest big words bring bigger woe !

HERAKLES

I am full fraught with ills—no stowing more ! 4875

THESEUS

Thou wilt do—what, then ? Whither moody  
borne ?

HERAKLES

Dying, I go below earth whence I came.

THESEUS

Thou hast used words of—what man turns up first !

HERAKLES

While thou, being outside sorrow, schoolest me.

THESEUS

The much-enduring Herakles talks thus ?— 4880

HERAKLES

Not the so much-enduring : measure 's past.

THESEUS

—Mainstay to mortals, and their mighty friend ?

HERAKLES

They nowise profit me : but Heré rules.

# ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

THESEUS

Hellas forbids thou shouldst ineptly die.

HERAKLES

But hear, then, how I strive by arguments  
Against thy teachings! I will ope thee out  
My life—past, present—as unliveable. 4885

First, I was born of this man, who had slain  
His mother's aged sire, and, sullied so,  
Married Alkmené, she who gave me birth. 4890

Now, when the basis of a family  
Is not laid right, what follows needs must fall;  
And Zeus, whoever Zeus is, formed me foe  
To Heré (take not thou offence, old man!  
Since father, in Zeus' stead, account I thee), 4895

And, while I was at suck yet, frightful snakes  
She introduced among my swaddling-clothes,—  
That bedfellow of Zeus!—to end me so.

But when I gained the youthful garb of flesh,  
The labours I endured—what need to tell? 4900

What lions ever, or three-bodied brutes,  
Tuphons or giants, or the four-legg'd swarms  
Of Kentaur-battle, did not I end out?

And that hound, headed all about with heads  
Which cropped up twice, the Hudra, having slain— 4905  
I both went through a myriad other toils

In full drove, and arrived among the dead  
To convoy, as Eurustheus bade, to light  
Haides' three-headed dog and doorkeeper.

But then I,—wretch,—dared this last labour—  
see! 4910

Slew my sons, keystone-coped my house with ills.  
To such a strait I come! nor my dear Thebes  
Dare I inhabit: and, suppose I stay?  
Into what fane or festival of friends

## HERAKLES

Am I to go? My curse scarce courts accost! 4915  
 Shall I seek Argos? How, if fled from home?  
 But say—I hurry to some other town!  
 And there they eye me, as notorious now,—  
 Kept by sharp tongue-taunts under lock and key—  
 “Is not this he, Zeus’ son, who murdered once 4920  
 Children and wife? Let him go rot elsewhere!”  
 To any man renowned as happy once,  
 Reverses are a grave thing; but to whom  
 Evil is old acquaintance there’s no hurt  
 To speak of, he and misery are twins. 4925  
 To this degree of woe I think to come:  
 For earth will utter voice forbidding me  
 To touch the ground, and sea—to pierce the wave,  
 The river-springs—to drink, and I shall play  
 Ixion’s part quite out, the chained and wheeled! 4930  
 And best of all will be, if so I ’scape  
 Sight from one man of those Hellenes,—once  
 I lived among, felicitous and rich!  
 Why ought I then to live? What gain accrues  
 From good-for-nothing, wicked life I lead? 4935  
 In fine, let Zeus’ brave consort dance and sing,  
 Stamp foot, the Olumpian Zeus’ own sandal-trick!  
 What she has willed, that brings her will to pass—  
 The foremost man of Hellas pedestalled,  
 Up, over, and down whirling! Who would pray 4940  
 To such a goddess?—that, begrudging Zeus  
 Because he loved a woman, ruins me—  
 Lover of Hellas, faultless of the wrong!

## THESEUS

This strife is from no other of the gods  
 Than Zeus’ wife; rightly apprehend, as well, 4945  
 Why, to no death—thou meditatest now—  
 I would persuade thee, but to bear thy woes!  
 None, none of mortals boasts a fate unmixed,



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Nor gods—if poets' teaching be not false.  
Have not they joined in wedlock against law 4950  
With one another? not, for sake of rule,  
Branded their sires in bondage? Yet they house,  
All the same, in Olumpos, carry heads  
High there, notorious sinners though they be!  
What wilt thou say, then, if thou, mortal-born, 4955  
Bearest outrageously fate gods endure?  
Leave Thebes, now, pay obedience to the law  
And follow me to Pallas' citadel!  
There, when thy hands are purified from stain,  
House will I give thee, and goods shared alike. 4960  
What gifts I hold too from the citizens  
For saving twice seven children, when I slew  
The Knosian bull, these also give I thee.  
And everywhere about the land are plots  
Apportioned me: these, named by thine own name, 4965  
Shall be henceforward styled by all men—thine,  
Thy life long; but at death, when Haides-bound,  
All Athens shall uphold the honoured one  
With sacrifices, and huge marble heaps:  
For that 's a fair crown our Hellenes grant 4970  
Their people—glory, should they help the brave!  
And I repay thee back this grace for thine  
That saved me, now that thou art lorn of friends—  
Since, when the gods give honour, friends may  
flit:  
For, a god's help suffices, if he please. 4975

### HERAKLES

Ah me, these words are foreign to my woes!  
I neither fancy gods love lawless beds,  
Nor, that with chains they bind each other's hands,  
Have I judged worthy faith, at any time;  
Nor shall I be persuaded—one is born 4980  
His fellows' master! since God stands in need—

## HERAKLES

If he is really God—of nought at all.  
These are the poets' pitiful conceits !  
But this it was I pondered, though woe-whelmed—  
"Take heed lest thou be taxed with cowardice 4985  
Somehow in leaving thus the light of day !"  
For whoso cannot make a stand against  
These same misfortunes, neither could withstand  
A mere man's dart, oppose death, strength to  
strength.  
Therefore unto thy city I will go 4990  
And have the grace of thy ten thousand gifts.  
There ! I have tasted of ten thousand toils  
As truly—never waived a single one,  
Nor let these runnings drop from out my eyes :  
Nor ever thought it would have come to this— 4995  
That I from out my eyes do drop tears. Well !  
At present, as it seems, one bows to fate.  
So be it ! Old man, thou seest my exile—  
Seest, too, me—my children's murderer !  
These give thou to the tomb, and deck the dead, 5000  
Doing them honour with thy tears—since me  
Law does not sanction. Propping on her breast,  
And giving them into their mother's arms,  
—Re-institute the sad community  
Which I, unhappy, brought to nothingness— 5005  
Not by my will ! And, when earth hides the dead,  
Live in this city !—sad, but, all the same,  
Force thy soul to bear woe along with me !  
O children, who begat and gave you birth—  
Your father—has destroyed you ! nought you gain 5010  
By those fair deeds of mine I laid you up,  
As by main-force I laboured glory out  
To give you,—that fine gift of fatherhood !  
And thee, too, O my poor one, I destroyed,  
Not rendering like for like, as when thou kept'st 5015  
My marriage-bed inviolate,—those long

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Household-seclusions draining to the dregs  
Inside my house! O me, my wife, my boys—  
And—O myself, how, miserably moved,  
Am I disyoked now from both boys and wife! 5020  
O bitter those delights of kisses now—  
And bitter these my weapons' fellowship!  
For I am doubtful whether shall I keep  
Or cast away these arrows which will clang  
Ever such words out, as they knock my side— 5025  
“Us—thou didst murder wife and children  
with!  
Us—child-destroyers—still thou keepest thine!”  
Ha, shall I bear them in my arms, then? What  
Say for excuse? Yet, naked of my darts  
Wherewith I did my bravest, Hellas through, 5030  
Throwing myself beneath foot to my foes,  
Shall I die basely? No! relinquishment  
Of these must never be,—companions once,  
We sorrowfully must observe the pact.  
In just one thing, co-operate with me 5035  
Thy sad friend, Theseus! Go along with him  
To Argos, and in concert get arranged  
The price my due for bringing there the Hound!  
O land of Kadmos, Theban people all,  
Shear off your locks, lament one wide lament, 5040  
Go to my children's grave and, in one strain,  
Lament the whole of us—my dead and me—  
Since all together are fordone and lost,  
Smitten by Heré's single stroke of fate!

### THESEUS

Rise up now from thy dead ones! Tears enough, 5045  
Poor friend!

### HERAKLES

I cannot: for my limbs are fixed.

## HERAKLES

THESEUS

Ay : even these strong men fate overthrows.

HERAKLES

Woe !

Here might I grow a stone, nor mind woes more !

THESEUS

Cease ! Give thy hand to friendly helpmate now ! 5050

HERAKLES

Nay, but I wipe off blood upon thy robes.

THESEUS

Squeeze out and spare no drop ! I take it all !

HERAKLES

Of sons bereaved, I have thee like my son.

THESEUS

Give to my neck thy hand ! 't is I will lead.

HERAKLES

Yoke-fellows friendly—one heart-broken, though ! 5055  
O father, such a man we need for friend !

AMPHITRUON

Certes the land that bred him boasts good sons.

HERAKLES

Turn me round, Theseus—to behold my boys !

THESEUS

What ? will the having such a love-charm  
soothe ?

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

HERAKLES

I want it ; and to press my father's breast.

5060.

AMPHITRUON

See here, O son ! for, what I love thou seek'st.

THESEUS

Strange ! Of thy labours no more memory ?

HERAKLES

All those were less than these, those ills I bore.

THESEUS

Who sees thee grow a woman,—will not praise.

HERAKLES

I live low to thee ? Not so once, I think.

5065

THESEUS

Too low by far ! “ Famed Herakles ”—where 's  
he ?

HERAKLES

Down amid evils, of what kind wast *thou* ?

THESEUS

As far as courage—least of all mankind !

HERAKLES

How say'st, then, *I* in evils shrink to nought ?

THESEUS

Forward !

HERAKLES

Farewell, old father !

# HERAKLES

AMPHITRUON

Thou too, son ! 5070

HERAKLES

Bury the boys as I enjoined !

AMPHITRUON

Who will be found to bury now, my child ?  
And *me*—

HERAKLES

Myself.

AMPHITRUON

When, coming ?

HERAKLES

When thy task is done.

AMPHITRUON

How ?

HERAKLES

I will have thee carried forth from Thebes  
To Athens. But bear in the children, earth 5075  
Is burthened by ! Myself,—who with these shames  
Have cast away my house,—a ruined hulk,  
I follow—trailed by Theseus—on my way ;  
And whoso rather would have wealth and strength  
Than good friends, reasons foolishly therein. 5080

CHOROS

And we depart, with sorrow at heart,  
Sobs that increase with tears that start ;  
The greatest of all our friends of yore  
We have lost for evermore !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

When the long silence ended,—“Our best friend— 5085  
 Lost, our best friend!” he muttered musingly.  
 Then, “Lachares the sculptor” (half aloud)  
 “Sinned he or sinned he not? ‘Outrageous sin!’  
 Shuddered our elders, ‘Pallas should be clothed :  
 He carved her naked.’ ‘But more beautiful!’ 5090  
 Answers this generation : ‘Wisdom formed  
 For love not fear!’ And there the statue stands,  
 Entraps the eye severer art repels.  
 Moreover, Pallas wields the thunderbolt  
 Yet has not struck the artist all this while. 5095  
 Pheidias and Aischulos? Euripides  
 And Lachares? But youth will have its way.  
 The ripe man ought to be as old as young—  
 As young as old. I too have youth at need.  
 Much may be said for stripping wisdom bare. 5100

“And who’s ‘our best friend’? You play kottabos;  
 Here’s the last mode of playing. Take a sphere  
 With orifices at due interval,  
 Through topmost one of which, a throw adroit  
 Sends wine from cup, clean passage, from outside 5105  
 To where, in hollow midst, a manikin  
 Suspended ever bobs with head erect  
 Right underneath whatever hole’s a-top  
 When you set orb a-rolling: plumb, he gets  
 Ever this benediction of the splash. 5110  
 An other-fashioned orb presents him fixed :  
 Of all the outlets, he fronts only one,  
 And only when that one,—and rare the chance,—  
 Comes uppermost, does he turn upward too :  
 He can’t turn all sides with the turning orb. 5115  
 Inside this sphere of life,—all objects, sense  
 And soul perceive,—Euripides hangs fixed,  
 Gets knowledge through the single aperture  
 Of High and Right: with visage fronting these

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

He waits the wine thence ere he operate, 5120  
 Work in the world and write a tragedy.  
 When that hole happens to revolve to point,  
 In drops the knowledge, waiting meets reward.  
 But, duly in rotation, Low and Wrong—  
 When these enjoy the moment's altitude, 5125  
 His heels are found just where his head should be!  
 No knowledge that way! I am moveable,—  
 To slightest shift of orb make prompt response,  
 Face Low and Wrong and Weak and all the rest,  
 And still drink knowledge, wine-drenched every  
     turn,— 5130  
 Equally favoured by their opposites.  
 Little and Bad exist, are natural :  
 Then let me know them, and be twice as great  
 As he who only knows one phase of life!  
 So doubly shall I prove 'best friend of man,' 5135  
 If I report the whole truth—Vice, perceived  
 While he shut eyes to all but Virtue there.  
 Man's made of both : and both must be of use  
 To somebody : if not to him, to me.  
 While, as to your imaginary Third 5140  
 Who, stationed (by mechanics past my guess)  
 So as to take in every side at once,  
 And not successively,—may reconcile  
 The High and Low in tragi-comic verse,—  
 He shall be hailed superior to us both 5145  
 When born—in the Tin-islands! Meantime, here  
 In bright Athenai, I contest the claim,  
 Call myself Iostephanos' 'best friend,'  
 Who took my own course, worked as I descried  
 Ordainment, stuck to my first faculty. 5150

"For listen! There's no failure breaks the heart,  
 Whate'er be man's endeavour in this world,  
 Like the rash poet's when he—nowise fails



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

By poetizing badly,—Zeus or makes  
 Or mars a man, so—at it, merrily ! 5155  
 But when,—made man,—much like myself,—  
 equipt

For such and such achievement,—rash he turns  
 Out of the straight path, bent on snatch of feat  
 From—who 's the appointed fellow born thereto,—  
 Crows take him !—in your Kassiterides ? 5160  
 Half-doing his work, leaving mine untouched,  
 That were the failure. Here I stand, heart-whole,  
 No Thamuris !

“ Well thought of, Thamuris !  
 Has zeal, pray, for ‘ best friend ’ Euripides  
 Allowed you to observe the honour done 5165  
 His elder rival, in our Poikilé ?  
 You don't know? Once and only once, trod stage,  
 Sang and touched lyre in person, in his youth,  
 Our Sophokles,—youth, beauty, dedicate  
 To Thamuris who named the tragedy. 5170  
 The voice of him was weak ; face, limbs and  
 lyre,

These were worth saving : Thamuris stands yet  
 Perfect as painting helps in such a case.  
 At least you know the story, for ‘ best friend ’  
 Enriched his ‘ Rhesos ’ from the Blind Bard's store ; 5175  
 So haste and see the work, and lay to heart  
 What it was struck me when I eyed the piece !  
 Here stands a poet punished for rash strife  
 With Powers above his power, who see with sight  
 Beyond his vision, sing accordingly 5180  
 A song, which he must needs dare emulate.  
 Poet, remain the man nor ape the Muse !

“ But—lend me the psalterion ! Nay, for once—  
 Once let my hand fall where the other's lay !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

I see it, just as I were Sophokles,  
That sunrise and combustion of the east ! ” 5185

And then he sang—are these unlike the words ?

Thamuris marching,—lyre and song of Thrace—  
(Perpend the first, the worst of woes that were  
Allotted lyre and song, ye poet-race !) 5190

Thamuris from Oichalia, feasted there  
By kingly Eurutos of late, now bound  
For Dorion at the uprise broad and bare

Of Mount Pangaïos (ore with earth enwound  
Glittered beneath his footstep)—marching gay 5195  
And glad, Thessalia through, came, robed and  
crowned,

From triumph on to triumph, mid a ray  
Of early morn,—came, saw and knew the spot  
Assigned him for his worst of woes, that day.

Balura—happier while its name was not— 5200  
Met him, but nowise menaced ; slipt aside,  
Obsequious river, to pursue its lot

Of solacing the valley—say, some wide  
Thick busy human cluster, house and home,  
Embanked for peace, or thrift that thanks the tide. 5205

Thamuris, marching, laughed “ Each flake of foam ”  
(As sparkingly the ripple raced him by)  
“ Mocks slower clouds adrift in the blue dome ! ”

For Autumn was the season ; red the sky  
Held morn's conclusive signet of the sun 5210  
To break the mists up, bid them blaze and die.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Morn had the mastery as, one by one  
All pomps produced themselves along the tract  
From earth's far ending to near heaven begun.

Was there a ravaged tree? it laughed compact 5215  
With gold, a leaf-ball crisp, high-brandished now,  
Tempting to onset frost which late attacked.

Was there a wizened shrub, a starveling bough,  
A fleecy thistle filched from by the wind,  
A weed, Pan's trampling hoof would disallow? 5220

Each, with a glory and a rapture twined  
About it, joined the rush of air and light  
And force: the world was of one joyous mind.

Say not the birds flew! they forebore their right—  
Swam, revelling onward in the roll of things. 5225  
Say not the beasts' mirth bounded! that was  
flight—

How could the creatures leap, no lift of wings?  
Such earth's community of purpose, such  
The ease of earth's fulfilled imaginings,—

So did the near and far appear to touch 5230  
I' the moment's transport,—that an interchange  
Of function, far with near, seemed scarce too  
much;

And had the rooted plant aspired to range  
With the snake's license, while the insect yearned  
To glow fixed as the flower, it were not strange— 5235

No more than if the fluttery tree-top turned  
To actual music, sang itself aloft;  
Or if the wind, impassioned chantress, earned

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The right to soar embodied in some soft  
Fine form all fit for cloud-companionship, 5240  
And, blissful, once touch beauty chased so oft.

Thamuris, marching, let no fancy slip  
Born of the fiery transport ; lyre and song  
Were his, to smite with hand and launch from lip—

Peerless recorded, since the list grew long 5245  
Of poets (saith Homeros) free to stand  
Pedestalled mid the Muses' temple-throng,

A statued service, laurelled, lyre in hand,  
(Ay, for we see them)—Thamuris of Thrace  
Predominating foremost of the band. 5250

Therefore the morn-ray that enriched his face,  
If it gave lambent chill, took flame again  
From flush of pride ; he saw, he knew the place.

What wind arrived with all the rhythms from  
plain,  
Hill, dale, and that rough wildwood interspersed? 5255  
Compounding these to one consummate strain,

It reached him, music ; but his own outburst  
Of victory concluded the account,  
And that grew song which was mere music erst.

“ Be my Parnassos, thou Pangaian mount ! 5260  
And turn thee, river, nameless hitherto !  
Famed shalt thou vie with famed Pieria's fount !

“ Here I await the end of this ado :  
Which wins—Earth's poet or the Heavenly  
Muse.” . . .

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

But song broke up in laughter. "Tell the rest 5265  
 Who may! *I* have not spurned the common life,  
 Nor vaunted mine a lyre to match the Muse  
 Who sings for gods, not men! Accordingly,  
 I shall not decorate her vestibule—  
 Mute marble, blind the eyes and quenched the brain, 5270  
 Loose in the hand a bright, a broken lyre!  
 —Not Thamuris but Aristophanes!

"There! I have sung content back to myself,  
 And started subject for a play beside.  
 My next performance shall content you both. 5275  
 Did 'Prelude-Battle' maul 'best friend' too much?  
 Then 'Main-Fight' be my next song, fairness' self!  
 Its subject—Contest for the Tragic Crown.  
 Ay, you shall hear none else but Aischulos  
 Lay down the law of Tragedy, and prove 5280  
 'Best friend' a stray-away,—no praise denied  
 His manifold deservings, never fear—  
 Nor word more of the old fun! Death defends.  
 Sound admonition has its due effect.  
 Oh, you have uttered weighty words, believe! 5285  
 Such as shall bear abundant fruit, next year,  
 In judgment, regular, legitimate.  
 Let Bacchos' self preside in person! Ay—  
 For there 's a buzz about those 'Bacchanals'  
 Rumour attributes to your great and dead 5290  
 For final effort: just the prodigy  
 Great dead men leave, to lay survivors low!  
 —Until we make acquaintance with our fate  
 And find, fate's worst done, we, the same, survive  
 Perchance to honour more the patron-god, 5295  
 Fitlier inaugurate a festal year.  
 Now that the cloud has broken, sky laughs blue,  
 Earth blossoms youthfully. Athenai breathes.  
 After a twenty-six years' wintry blank

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Struck from her life,—war-madness, one long  
 swoon, 5300  
 She wakes up : Arginousai bids good cheer.  
 We have disposed of Kallikratidas ;  
 Once more will Sparté sue for terms,—who knows ?  
 Cede Dekeleia, as the rumour runs :  
 Terms which Athenai, of right mind again, 5305  
 Accepts—she can no other. Peace declared,  
 Have my long labours borne their fruit or no ?  
 Grinned coarse buffoonery so oft in vain ?  
 Enough—it simply saved you. Saved ones, praise  
 Theoria's beauty and Opora's breadth ! 5310  
 Nor, when Peace realizes promised bliss,  
 Forget the Bald Bard, Envy ! but go burst  
*As the cup goes round and the cates abound,*  
*Collops of hare with roast spinks rare !*  
 Confess my pipings, dancings, posings served 5315  
 A purpose : guttlings, guzzlings, had their use !  
 Say whether light Muse, Rosy-finger-tips,  
 Or 'best friend's' heavy-hand, Melpomené,  
 Touched lyre to purpose, played Amphion's part,  
 And built Athenai to the skies once more ! 5320  
 Farewell, brave couple ! Next year, welcome me !"

---

No doubt, in what he said that night, sincere !  
 One story he referred to, false or fact,  
 Was not without adaptability.  
 They do say—Lais the Corinthian once 5325  
 Chancing to see Euripides (who paced  
 Composing in a garden, tablet-book  
 In left hand, with appended stulos prompt)  
 "Answer me," she began, "O Poet,—this !  
 What didst intend by writing in thy play 5330  
*Go hang, thou filthy doer ?*" Struck on heap,  
 Euripides, at the audacious speech—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

"Well now," quoth he, "thyself art just the one  
I should imagine fit for deeds of filth!"

She laughingly retorted his own line

"What's filth,—unless who does it, thinks it so?" 5335

Somight he doubtless think. "Farewell," said we.

And he was gone, lost in the morning-grey,  
Rose-streaked and gold to eastward. Did we  
dream?

Could the poor twelve-hours hold this argument 5340

We render durable from fugitive,

As duly at each sunset's droop of sail,

Delay of oar, submission to sea-might,

I still remember, you as duly dint

Remembrance, with the punctual rapid style, 5345

Into—what calm cold page!

Thus soul escapes

From eloquence made captive: thus mere words

—Ah, would the lifeless body stay! But no:

Change upon change till,—who may recognize

What did soul service, in the dusty heap? 5350

What energy of Aristophanes

Inflames the wreck Balaustion saves to show?

Ashes be evidence how fire—with smoke—

All night went lamping on! But morn must rise.

The poet—I shall say—burned up and, blank 5355

Smouldered this ash, now white and cold enough.

Nay, Euthukles! for best, though mine it be,  
Comes yet. Write on, write ever, wrong no word!

Add, first,—he gone, if jollity went too,  
Some of the graver mood, which mixed and marred, 5360  
Departed likewise. Sight of narrow scope

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Has this meek consolation : neither ills  
We dread, nor joys we dare anticipate,  
Perform to promise. Each soul sows a seed—  
Euripides and Aristophanes ; 5365  
Seed bears crop, scarce within our little lives ;  
But germinates,—perhaps enough to judge,—  
Next year ?

Whereas, next year brought harvest time !  
For, next year came, and went not, but is now,  
Still now, while you and I are bound for Rhodes 5370  
That's all but reached—and harvest has it brought,  
Dire as the homicidal dragon-crop.  
Sophokles had dismissal ere it dawned,  
Happy as ever ; though men mournfully  
Plausible,—when only soul could triumph now, 5375  
And Iophon produced his father's play,—  
Crowned the consummate song where Oidipous  
Dared the descent mid earthquake-thundering,  
And hardly Theseus' hands availed to guard  
Eyes from the horror, as their grove disgorged 5380  
Its dread ones, while each daughter sank to ground.

Then Aristophanes, on heel of that,  
Triumphant also, followed with his "Frogs :"  
Produced at next Lenaia,—three months since,—  
The promised Main-Fight, loyal, license-free ! 5385  
As if the poet, primed with Thasian juice,  
(Himself swore—wine that conquers every kind  
For long abiding in the head) could fix  
Thenceforward any object in its truth,  
Through eyeballs bathed by mere Castalian dew, 5390  
Nor miss the borrowed medium,—vinous drop  
That colours all to the right crimson pitch  
When mirth grows mockery, censure takes the tinge  
Of malice !



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

All was Aristophanes :

There blazed the glory, there shot black the shame. 5395

Ay, Bacchos did stand forth, the Tragic God  
In person ! and when duly dragged through  
mire,—

Having lied, filched, played fool, proved coward,  
flung

The boys their dose of fit indecency,  
And finally got trounced to heart's content, 5400

At his own feast, in his own theatre

(—Oh never fear ! 'T was consecrated sport,

Exact tradition, warranted no whit  
Offensive to instructed taste,—indeed,  
Essential to Athenai's liberty, 5405

Could the poor stranger understand !) why, then—

He was pronounced the rarely-qualified

To rate the work, adjust the claims to worth,

Of Aischulos (of whom, in other mood,  
This same appreciative poet pleased 5410

To say " He 's all one stiff and gluey piece

Of back of swine's neck ! ")—and of Chatterbox

Who, " twisting words like wool," usurped his seat

In Plouton's realm : " the arch-rogue, liar, scamp  
That lives by snatching-up of altar-orts," 5415

—Who failed to recognize Euripides ?

Then came a contest for supremacy—

Crammed full of genius, wit and fun and freak.

No spice of undue spite to spoil the dish

Of all sorts,—for the Mystics matched the Frogs 5420

In poetry, no Seiren sang so sweet !—

Till, pressed into the service (how dispense

With Phaps-Elaphion and free foot-display ?)

The Muse of dead Euripides danced frank,

Rattled her bits of tile, made all too plain 5425

How baby-work like " Herakles " had birth !

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Last, Bacchos,—candidly disclaiming brains  
 Able to follow finer argument,—  
 Confessed himself much moved by three main  
 facts :

First,—if you stick a “ Lost his flask of oil ” 5430  
 At pause of period, you perplex the sense—  
 Were it the Elegy for Marathon !

Next, if you weigh two verses, “ car ”—the word,  
 Will outweigh “ club ”—the word, in each packed  
 line !

And—last, worst fact of all !—in rivalry 5435  
 The younger poet dared to improvise  
 Laudation less distinct of—Triphales ?

(Nay, that served when ourself abused the youth !)  
 Pheidippides ? (nor that 's appropriate now !)

Then,—Alkibiades, our city's hope, 5440  
 Since times change and we Comics should change  
 too !

These three main facts, well weighed, drew judg-  
 ment down,

Conclusively assigned the wretch his fate—  
 “ Fate due ” admonished the sage Mystic choir,  
 “ To sitting, prate-apace, with Sokrates, 5445  
 Neglecting music and each tragic aid ! ”

—All wound-up by a wish “ We soon may cease  
 From certain griefs, and warfare, worst of them ! ”

—Since, deaf to Comedy's persistent voice,  
 War still raged, still was like to rage. In vain 5450  
 Had Sparté cried once more “ But grant us Peace  
 We give you Dekeleia back ! ” Too shrewd  
 Was Kleophon to let escape, forsooth,  
 The enemy—at final gasp, besides !

So, Aristophanes obtained the prize, 5455  
 And so Athenai felt she had a friend  
 Far better than her “ best friend,” lost last year ;

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

And so, such fame had "Frogs" that, when came  
round

This present year, those Frogs croaked gay again  
At the great Feast, Elaphebolion-month.

5460

Only—there happened Aigispotamoi !

And, in the midst of the frog-merriment,  
Plump o' the sudden, pounces stern King Stork  
On the light-hearted people of the marsh !

Spartan Lusandros swooped precipitate,

5465

Ended Athenai, rowed her sacred bay

With oars which brought a hundred triremes back  
Captive !

And first word of the conqueror  
Was "Down with those Long Walls, Peiraios'  
pride !

Destroy, yourselves, your bulwarks ! Peace needs  
none !"

5470

And "We obey" they shuddered in their dream.

But, at next quick imposure of decree—

"No longer democratic government !

Henceforth such oligarchy as ourselves

Please to appoint you !"—then the horror stung

5475

Dreamers awake ; they started up a-stare

At the half-helot captain and his crew

—Spartans, "men used to let their hair grow  
long,

To fast, be dirty, and just—Socratize"—

Whose word was "Trample on Themistokles !" "

5480

So, as the way is with much misery,

The heads swam, hands refused their office, hearts

Sunk as they stood in stupor. "Wreck the Walls?

Ruin Peiraios?—with our Pallas armed

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

For interference?—Herakles apprised, 5485  
And Theseus hasting? Lay the Long Walls  
low?"

Three days they stood, stared,—stonier than their  
walls.

Whereupon, sleep who might, Lusandros woke :  
Saw the prostration of his enemy,  
Utter and absolute beyond belief, 5490  
Past hope of hatred even. I surmise  
He also probably saw fade in fume  
Certain fears, bred of Bakis-prophecy,  
Nor apprehended any more that gods  
And heroes,—fire, must glow forth, guard the  
ground 5495

Where prone, by sober day-dawn, corpse-like lay  
Powerless Athenai, late predominant  
Lady of Hellas,—Sparté's slave-prize now !  
Where should a menace lurk in those slack limbs ?  
What was to move his circumspection ? Why 5500  
Demolish just Peiraios ?

“ Stay ! ” bade he :  
“ Already promise-breakers ? True to type,  
Athenians ! past and present and to come—  
The fickle and the false ! No stone dislodged,  
No implement applied, yet three days' grace 5505  
Expire ! Forbearance is no longer-lived.  
By breaking promise, terms of peace you break—  
Too gently framed for falsehood, fickleness !  
All must be reconsidered—yours the fault ! ”

Wherewith, he called a council of allies. 5510  
Pent-up resentment used its privilege,—  
Outburst at ending : this the summed result.

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

" Because we would avenge no transient wrong  
 But an eternity of insolence,  
 Aggression,—folly, no disasters mend, 5515  
 Pride, no reverses teach humility,—  
 Because too plainly were all punishment,  
 Such as comports with less obdurate crime,  
 Evadable by falsehood, fickleness—  
 Experience proves the true Athenian type,— 5520  
 Therefore, 't is need we dig deep down into  
 The root of evil ; lop nor bole nor branch.  
 Look up, look round and see, on every side,  
 What nurtured the rank tree to noisome fruit !  
 We who live hutted (so they laugh) not housed, 5525  
 Build barns for temples, prize mud-monuments,  
 Nor show the sneering stranger aught but—men,—  
 Spartans take insult of Athenians just  
 Because they boast Akropolis to mount,  
 And Propulaia to make entry by, 5530  
 Through a mad maze of marble arrogance  
 Such as you see—such as let none see more !  
 Abolish the detested luxury !  
 Leave not one stone upon another, raze  
 Athenai to the rock ! Let hill and plain 5535  
 Become a waste, a grassy pasture-ground  
 Where sheep may wander, grazing goats depend  
 From shapeless crags once columns ! so at last  
 Shall peace inhabit there, and peace enough."

Whereon, a shout approved "Such peace bestow !" 5540

Then did a Man of Phokis rise—O heart !  
 Rise—when no bolt of Zeus disparted sky,  
 No omen-bird from Pallas scared the crew,  
 Rise—when mere human argument could stem  
 No foam-fringe of the passion surging fierce, 5545  
 Baffle no wrath-wave that o'er barrier broke—

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

*Who* was the Man of Phokis rose and flung  
A flower i' the way of that fierce foot's advance,  
Which — stop for? — nay, had stamped down  
sword's assault!

Could it be *He* stayed Sparté with the snatch 5550  
“ Daughter of Agamemnon, late my liege,  
Elektra, palaced once, a visitant  
To thy poor rustic dwelling, now I come ? ”

Ay, facing fury of revenge, and lust  
Of hate, and malice moaning to appease 5555  
Hunger on prey presumptuous, prostrate now—  
Full in the hideous faces—last resource,  
You flung that choric flower, my Euthukles!

And see, as through some pinhole, should the wind  
Wedgingly pierce but once, in with a rush 5560  
Hurries the whole wild weather, rends to rags  
The weak sail stretched against the outside storm—  
So did the power of that triumphant play  
Pour in, and oversweep the assembled foe!  
Triumphant play, wherein our poet first 5565  
Dared bring the grandeur of the Tragic Two  
Down to the level of our common life,  
Close to the beating of our common heart.  
Elektra? 'T was Athenai, Sparté's ice  
Thawed to, while that sad portraiture appealed— 5570  
Agamemnonian lady, lost by fault  
Of her own kindred, cast from house and home,  
Despoiled of all the brave inheritance,  
Dowered humbly as befits a herdsman's mate,  
Partaker of his cottage, clothed in rags, 5575  
Patient performer of the poorest chares,  
Yet mindful, all the while, of glory past  
When she walked darling of Mukenai, dear  
Beyond Orestes to the King of Men!

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

So, because Greeks are Greeks, though Sparté's  
 brood, 5580  
 And hearts are hearts, though in Lusandros' breast,  
 And poetry is power, and Euthukles  
 Had faith therein to, full-face, fling the same—  
 Sudden, the ice-thaw! The assembled foe,  
 Heaving and swaying with strange friendliness, 5585  
 Cried "Reverence Elektra!"—cried "Abstain  
 Like that chaste Herdsman, nor dare violate  
 The sanctity of such reverse! Let stand  
 Athenai!"

Mindful of that story's close,  
 Perchance, and how,—when he, the Herdsman  
 chaste, 5590  
 Needs apprehend no break of tranquil sleep,—  
 All in due time, a stranger, dark, disguised,  
 Knocks at the door: with searching glance, notes  
 keen,  
 Knows quick, through mean attire and disre-  
 spect,  
 The ravaged princess! Ay, right on, the clutch 5595  
 Of guiding retribution has in charge  
 The author of the outrage! While one hand,  
 Elektra's, pulls the door behind, made fast  
 On fate,—the other strains, prepared to push  
 The victim-queen, should she make frightened  
 pause 5600  
 Before that serpentine blood which steals  
 Out of the darkness where, a pace beyond,  
 Above the slain Aigisthos, bides his blow  
 Dreadful Orestes!

Klutaimnestra, wise  
 This time, forbore; Elektra held her own; 5605  
 Saved was Athenai through Euripides,

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Through Euthukles, through—more than ever—  
me,

Balaustion, me, who, Wild-pomegranate-flower,  
Felt my fruit triumph, and fade proudly so !

5610

But next day, as ungracious minds are wont,  
The Spartan, late surprised into a grace,  
Grew sudden sober at the enormity,  
And grudged, by daybreak, midnight's easy gift ;  
Splenetically must repay its cost

5615

By due increase of rigour, doglike snatch  
At aught still left dog to concede like man.  
Rough sea, at flow of tide, may lip, perchance,  
Smoothly the land-line reached as for repose—  
Lie indolent in all unquestioned sway ;  
But ebbing, when needs must, all thwart and loth, 5620  
Sea claws at sand relinquished strugglingly.  
So, harsh Lusandros—pinioned to inflict  
The lesser penalty alone—spoke harsh,  
As minded to embitter scathe by scorn.

“ Athenai's self be saved then, thank the Lyre ! 5625  
If Tragedy withdraws her presence—quick,  
If Comedy replace her,—what more just ?

Let Comedy do service, frisk away,  
Dance off stage these indomitable stones,  
Long Walls, Peiraian bulwarks ! Hew and heave, 5630  
Pick at, pound into dust each dear defence !  
Not to the Kommos—*eleleleleu*

With breast bethumped, as Tragic lyre prefers,  
But Comedy shall sound the flute, and crow  
At kordax-end—the hearty slapping-dance ! 5635  
Collect those flute-girls—trash who flattered ear  
With whistlings and fed eye with caper-cuts  
While we Lakonians supped black broth or  
crunched



## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Sea-urchin, conchs and all, unpricked—coarse  
brutes !

Command they lead off step, time steady stroke 5640  
To spade and pickaxe, till demolished lie  
Athenai's pride in powder ! ”

Done that day—  
That sixteenth famed day of Munuchion-month !  
The day when Hellas fought at Salamis,  
The very day Euripides was born, 5645  
Those flute-girls—Phaps-Elaphion at their head—  
Did blow their best, did dance their worst, the while  
Sparté pulled down the walls, wrecked wide the  
works,  
Laid low each merest molehill of defence,  
And so the Power, Athenai, passed away ! 5650

We would not see its passing. Ere I knew  
The issue of their counsels,—crouching low  
And shrouded by my peplos,—I conceived,  
Despite the shut eyes, the stopped ears,—by count  
Only of heart-beats, telling the slow time,— 5655  
Athenai's doom was signed and signified  
In that assembly,—ay, but knew there watched  
One who would dare and do, nor bate at all  
The stranger's licensed duty,—speak the word  
Allowed the Man from Phokis ! Nought remained 5660  
But urge departure, flee the sights and sounds,  
Hideous exultings, wailings worth contempt,  
And press to other earth, new heaven, by sea  
That somehow ever prompts to 'scape despair.

Help rose to heart's wish ; at the harbour-side, 5665  
The old grey mariner did reverence  
To who had saved his ship, still weather-tight  
As when with prow gay-garlanded she praised

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

The hospitable port and pushed to sea.  
"Convoy Balaustion back to Rhodes, for sake 5670  
Of her and her Euripides!" laughed he.

Rhodes,—shall it not be there, my Euthukles,  
Till this brief trouble of a life-time end,  
That solitude—two make so populous!—  
For food finds memories of the past suffice, 5675  
May be, anticipations,—hope so swells,—  
Of some great future we, familiar once  
With who so taught, should hail and entertain?  
He lies now in the little valley, laughed  
And moaned about by those mysterious streams, 5680  
Boiling and freezing, like the love and hate  
Which helped or harmed him through his earthly  
course.

They mix in Arethousa by his grave.  
The warm spring, traveller, dip thine arms into,  
Brighten thy brow with! Life detests black cold. 5685

I sent the tablets, the psalterion, so  
Rewarded Sicily; the tyrant there  
Bestowed them worthily in Phoibos' shrine.  
A gold-graved writing tells—"I also loved  
The poet, Free Athenai cheaply prized— 5690  
King Dionusios,—Archelaos-like!"

And see if young Philemon,—sure one day  
To do good service and be loved himself,—  
If he too have not made a votive verse!  
"Grant, in good sooth, our great dead, all the same, 5695  
Retain their sense, as certain wise men say,  
I'd hang myself—to see Euripides!"  
Hands off, Philemon! nowise hang thyself,  
But pen the prime plays, labour the right life,  
And die at good old age as grand men use,— 5700

## ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY

Keeping thee, with that great thought, warm the  
while,—

That he does live, Philemon! Ay, most sure!

“He lives!” hark,—waves say, winds sing out  
the same,

And yonder dares the citied ridge of Rhodes

Its headlong plunge from sky to sea, disparts 5705

North bay from south,—each guarded calm, that  
guest

May enter gladly, blow what wind there will,—

Boiled round with breakers, to no other cry!

All in one chorus,—what the master-word

They take up?—hark! “There are no gods, no  
gods!

5710

Glory to God—who saves Euripides!”

# THE INN ALBUM

VOL. VIII

N



# THE INN ALBUM

1875

## I

“THAT oblong book ’s the Album ; hand it here !  
Exactly ! page on page of gratitude  
For breakfast, dinner, supper, and the view !  
I praise these poets : they leave margin-space ;  
Each stanza seems to gather skirts around, 5  
And primly, trimly, keep the foot’s confine,  
Modest and maidlike ; lubber prose o’ersprawls  
And straddling stops the path from left to right.  
Since I want space to do my cipher-work,  
Which poem spares a corner ? What comes first ? 10  
*‘Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot !’*  
(Open the window, we burn daylight, boy !)  
Or see—succincter beauty, brief and bold—  
*‘If a fellow can dine On rumpsteaks and port wine,  
He needs not despair Of dining well here—’* 15  
*‘Here !’* I myself could find a better rhyme !  
That bard ’s a Browning ; he neglects the form :  
But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense !  
Still, I prefer this classic. Ay, throw wide !  
I ’ll quench the bits of candle yet unburnt. 20  
A minute’s fresh air, then to cipher-work !  
Three little columns hold the whole account :  
*Ecarté*, after which Blind Hookey, then  
Cutting-the-Pack, five hundred pounds the cut.  
’T is easy reckoning : I have lost, I think.” 25

## THE INN ALBUM

Two personages occupy this room  
Shabby-genteel, that 's parlour to the inn  
Perched on a view-commanding eminence ;  
—Inn which may be a veritable house  
Where somebody once lived and pleased good taste 30  
Till tourists found his coign of vantage out,  
And fingered blunt the individual mark,  
And vulgarized things comfortably smooth.  
On a sprig-pattern-papered wall there brays  
Complaint to sky Sir Edwin's dripping stag ; 35  
His couchant coast-guard creature corresponds ;  
They face the Huguenot and Light o' the World.  
Grim o'er the mirror on the mantelpiece,  
Varnished and confined, *Salmo ferox* glares  
—Possibly at the List of Wines which, framed 40  
And glazed, hangs somewhat prominent on peg.

So much describes the stuffy little room—  
Vulgar flat smooth respectability :  
Not so the burst of landscape surging in,  
Sunrise and all, as he who of the pair 45  
Is, plain enough, the younger personage  
Draws sharp the shrieking curtain, sends aloft  
The sash, spreads wide and fastens back to wall  
Shutter and shutter, shows you England's best.  
He leans into a living glory-bath 50  
Of air and light where seems to float and move  
The wooded watered country, hill and dale  
And steel-bright thread of stream, a-smoke with  
mist,  
A-sparkle with May morning, diamond drift  
O' the sun-touched dew. Except the red-roofed  
patch 55  
Of half a dozen dwellings that, crept close  
For hill-side shelter, make the village-clump,  
This inn is perched above to dominate—

## THE INN ALBUM

Except such sign of human neighbourhood,  
(And this surmised rather than sensible) 60  
There 's nothing to disturb absolute peace,  
The reign of English nature—which means art  
And civilized existence. Wildness' self  
Is just the cultured triumph. Presently  
Deep solitude, be sure, reveals a Place 65  
That knows the right way to defend itself :  
Silence hems round a burning spot of life.  
Now, where a Place burns, must a village brood,  
And where a village broods, an inn should  
boast—  
Close and convenient : here you have them both. 70  
This inn, the Something-arms—the family's—  
(Don't trouble Guillim : heralds leave out half !)  
Is dear to lovers of the picturesque,  
And epics have been planned here ; but who plan  
Take holy orders and find work to do. 75  
Painters are more productive, stop a week,  
Declare the prospect quite a Corot,—ay,  
For tender sentiment,—themselves incline  
Rather to handsweep large and liberal ;  
Then go, but not without success achieved 80  
—Haply some pencil-drawing, oak or beech,  
Ferns at the base and ivies up the bole,  
On this a slug, on that a butterfly.  
Nay, he who hooked the *salmo* pendent here,  
Also exhibited, this same May-month, 85  
' *Foxgloves : a study* '—so inspires the scene,  
The air, which now the younger personage  
Inflates him with till lungs o'erfraught are fain  
Sigh forth a satisfaction might bestir  
Even those tufts of tree-tops to the South 90  
I' the distance where the green dies off to grey,  
Which, easy of conjecture, front the Place ;  
He eyes them, elbows wide, each hand to cheek.



## THE INN ALBUM

His fellow, the much older—either say  
A youngish-old man or man oldish-young— 95  
Sits at the table : wicks are noisome-deep  
In wax, to detriment of plated ware ;  
Above—piled, strewn—is store of playing-cards,  
Counters and all that 's proper for a game.  
He sets down, rubs out figures in the book, 100  
Adds and subtracts, puts back here, carries there,  
Until the summed-up satisfaction stands  
Apparent, and he pauses o'er the work :  
Soothes what of brain was busy under brow,  
By passage of the hard palm, curing so 105  
Wrinkle and crowfoot for a second's space ;  
Then lays down book and laughs out. No mistake,  
Such the sum-total—ask Colenso else !

Roused by which laugh, the other turns, laughs  
too—  
The youth, the good strong fellow, rough perhaps. 110

“Well, what 's the damage—three, or four, or five?  
How many figures in a row? Hand here !  
Come now, there 's one expense all yours not  
mine—  
Scribbling the people's Album over, leaf  
The first and foremost too ! You think, perhaps, 115  
They 'll only charge you for a brand-new book  
Nor estimate the literary loss ?  
Wait till the small account comes ! ‘*To one night's  
Lodging,*’—for ‘beds,’ they can't say,—‘*pound or so ;  
Dinner, Apollinaris,—what they please,*’ 120  
*Attendance not included ;*’ last looms large  
‘*Defacement of our Album, late enriched  
With*’—let 's see what ! Here, at the window,  
though !  
Ay, breathe the morning and forgive your luck !

## THE INN ALBUM

Fine enough country for a fool like me 125  
 To own, as next month I suppose I shall !  
 Eh ? True fool's-fortune ! so console yourself.  
 Let 's see, however—hand the book, I say !  
 Well, you 've improved the classic by romance.  
 Queer reading ! Verse with parenthetical prose— 130  
*'Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot !'*  
 (Three-two fives) *'life how profitably spent'*  
 (Five-nought, five-nine fives) *'yonder humble cot,'*  
 (More and more noughts and fives) *'in mild content ;*  
*And did my feelings find the natural vent* 135  
*In friendship and in love, how blest my lot !'*  
 Then follow the dread figures—five ! *'Content !'*  
 That 's apposite ! Are you content as he—  
 Simpkin the sonneteer ? *Ten thousand pounds*  
 Give point to his effusion—by so much 140  
 Leave me the richer and the poorer you  
 After our night's play ; who 's content the most,  
 I, you, or Simpkin ? ”

So the polished snob.

The elder man, refinement every inch  
 From brow to boot-end, quietly replies : 145

“ Simpkin 's no name I know. I had my whim.”

“ Ay, had you ! And such things make friendship thick.

Intimates I may boast we were ; henceforth,  
 Friends—shall it not be ?—who discard reserve,  
 Use plain words, put each dot upon each i, 150  
 Till death us twain do part ? The bargain 's struck !  
 Old fellow, if you fancy—(to begin—)  
 I failed to penetrate your scheme last week,  
 You wrong your poor disciple. Oh, no airs !  
 Because you happen to be twice my age 155  
 And twenty times my master, must perforce

## THE INN ALBUM

No blink of daylight struggle through the web  
 There 's no unwinding? You entoil my legs,  
 And welcome, for I like it : blind me,—no!  
 A very pretty piece of shuttle-work 160  
 Was that—your mere chance question at the club—  
 ‘ *Do you go anywhere this Whitsuntide?*  
*I'm off for Paris, there 's the Opera—there 's*  
*The Salon, there 's a china-sale,—beside*  
*Chantilly ; and, for good companionship,* 165  
*There 's Such-and-such and So-and-so. Suppose*  
*We start together?* ‘ *No such holiday!*  
 I told you : ‘ *Paris and the rest be hanged!*  
*Why plague me who am pledged to home-delights?*  
*I'm the engaged now; through whose fault but yours?* 170  
*On duty. As you well know. Don't I drowse*  
*The week away down with the Aunt and Niece?*  
*No help : it 's leisure, loneliness and love.*  
*Wish I could take you ; but fame travels fast,—*  
*A man of much newspaper-paragraph* 175  
*You scare domestic circles ; and beside*  
*Would not you like your lot, that second taste*  
*Of nature and approval of the grounds!*  
*You might walk early or lie late, so shirk*  
*Week-day devotions : but stay Sunday o'er,* 180  
*And morning church is obligatory :*  
*No mundane garb permissible, or dread*  
*The butler's privileged monition! No!*  
*Pack off to Paris, nor wipe tear away!*  
 Whereon how artlessly the happy flash 185  
 Followed, by inspiration! ‘ *Tell you what—*  
*Let 's turn their flank, try things on t' other side!*  
*Inns for my money! Liberty 's the life!*  
*We 'll lie in hiding: there 's the crow-nest nook,*  
*The tourist's joy, the Inn they rave about,* 190  
*Inn that 's out—out of sight and out of mind*  
*And out of mischief to all four of us—*

## THE INN ALBUM

- Aunt and niece, you and me. At night arrive ;  
At morn, find time for just a Pisgah-view  
Of my friend's Land of Promise ; then depart. 195  
And while I 'm whizzing onward by first train,  
Bound for our own place (since my Brother sulks  
And says I shun him like the plague) yourself—  
Why, you have stepped thence, start from platform,  
gay  
Despite the sleepless journey,—love lends wings,— 200  
Hug aunt and niece who, none the wiser, wait  
The faithful advent ! Eh ? ' With all my heart,'  
Said I to you ; said I to mine own self :  
' Does he believe I fail to comprehend  
He wants just one more final friendly snack 205  
At friend's exchequer ere friend runs to earth,  
Marries, renounces yielding friends such sport ?'  
And did I spoil sport, pull face grim,—nay, grave?  
Your pupil does you better credit ! No !  
I parleyed with my pass-book,—rubbed my pair 210  
At the big balance in my banker's hands,—  
Folded a cheque cigar-case-shape,—just wants  
Filling and signing,—and took train, resolved  
To execute myself with decency  
And let you win—if not Ten thousand quite, 215  
Something by way of wind-up-farewell burst  
Of firework-nosegay ! Where's your fortune fled ?  
Or is not fortune constant after all ?  
You lose ten thousand pounds : had I lost half  
Or half that, I should bite my lips, I think. 220  
You man of marble ! Strut and stretch my best  
On tiptoe, I shall never reach your height.  
How does the loss feel ! Just one lesson more !''  
The more refined man smiles a frown away.  
"The lesson shall be—only boys like you 225  
Put such a question at the present stage.*

## THE INN ALBUM

I had a ball lodge in my shoulder once,  
And, full five minutes, never guessed the fact ;  
Next day, I felt decidedly : and still,  
At twelve years' distance, when I lift my arm 230  
A twinge reminds me of the surgeon's probe.  
Ask me, this day month, how I feel my luck !  
And meantime please to stop impertinence,  
For—don't I know its object ? All this chaff  
Covers the corn, this preface leads to speech, 235  
This boy stands forth a hero. ' *There, my lord !  
Our play was true play, fun not earnest ! I  
Empty your purse, inside out, while my poke  
Bulges to bursting ? You can badly spare  
A doit, confess now, Duke though brother be !* 240  
*While I'm gold-daubed so thickly, spangles drop  
And show my father's warehouse-apron : pshaw !  
Enough ! We've had a palpitating night !  
Good morning ! Breakfast and forget our dreams !  
My mouth's shut, mind ! I tell nor man nor mouse.* 245  
There, see ! He don't deny it ! Thanks, my boy !  
Hero and welcome—only, not on me  
Make trial of your 'prentice-hand ! Enough !  
We've played, I've lost and owe ten thousand  
pounds,  
Whereof I muster, at the moment,—well, 250  
What's for the bill here and the back to town.  
Still, I've my little character to keep :  
You may expect your money at month's end."

The young man at the window turns round quick—  
A clumsy giant handsome creature ; grasps 255  
In his large red the little lean white hand  
Of the other, looks him in the sallow face.

"I say now—is it right to so mistake  
A fellow, force him in mere self-defence

## THE INN ALBUM

To spout like Mister *Mild Acclivity* 260  
In album-language? You know well enough  
Whether I like you—*like* 's no album-word  
Anyhow : point me to one soul beside  
In the wide world I care one straw about !  
I first set eyes on you a year ago ; 265  
Since when you've done me good—I'll stick to it—  
More than I got in the whole twenty-five  
That make my life up, Oxford years and all—  
Throw in the three I fooled away abroad,  
Seeing myself and nobody more sage 270  
Until I met you, and you made me man  
Such as the sort is and the fates allow.  
I do think, since we two kept company,  
I've learnt to know a little—all through you !  
It's nature if I like you. Taunt away ! 275  
As if I need you teaching me my place—  
The snob I am, the Duke your brother is,  
When just the good you did was—teaching me  
My own trade, how a snob and millionaire  
May lead his life and let the Duke's alone, 280  
Clap wings, free jackdaw, on his steeple-perch,  
Burnish his black to gold in sun and air,  
Nor pick up stray plumes, strive to match in strut  
Regular peacocks who can't fly an inch  
Over the courtyard-paling. Head and heart 285  
(That 's album-style) are older than you know,  
For all your knowledge : boy, perhaps—ay, boy  
Had his adventure, just as he were man—  
His ball-experience in the shoulder-blade,  
His bit of life-long ache to recognize, 290  
Although he bears it cheerily about,  
Because you came and clapped him on the back,  
Advised him '*Walk and wear the aching off!*'  
Why, I was minded to sit down for life  
Just in Dalmatia, build a sea-side tower 295

## THE INN ALBUM

High on a rock, and so expend my days  
 Pursuing chemistry or botany  
 Or, very like, astronomy because  
 I noticed stars shone when I passed the place :  
 Letting my cash accumulate the while 300  
 In England—to lay out in lump at last  
 As Ruskin should direct me ! All or some  
 Of which should I have done or tried to do,  
 And preciousy repented, one fine day,  
 Had you discovered Timon, climbed his rock 305  
 And scaled his tower, some ten years thence,  
     suppose,  
 And coaxed his story from him ! Don't I see  
 The pair conversing ! It 's a novel writ  
 Already, I 'll be bound,—our dialogue !  
 ' *What ?* ' cried the elder and yet youthful man— 310  
 So did the eye flash 'neath the lordly front,  
 And the imposing presence swell with scorn,  
 As the haught high-bred bearing and dispose  
 Contrasted with his interlocutor  
 The flabby low-born who, of bulk before, 315  
 Had steadily increased, one stone per week,  
 Since his abstention from horse-exercise :—  
 ' *What ?* you, as rich as Rothschild, left, you say,  
 London the very year you came of age,  
 Because your father manufactured goods— 320  
 Commission-agent hight of Manchester—  
 Partly, and partly through a baby case  
 Of disappointment I 've pumped out at last—  
 And here you spend life's prime in gaining flesh  
 And giving science one more asteroid ? ' 325  
 Brief, my dear fellow, you instructed me,  
 At Alfred's and not Istria ! proved a snob  
 May turn a million to account although  
 His brother be no Duke, and see good days  
 Without the girl he lost and someone gained. 330

## THE INN ALBUM

The end is, after one year's tutelage,  
Having, by your help, touched society,  
Polo, Tent-Pegging, Hurlingham, the Rink—  
I leave all these delights, by your advice,  
And marry my young pretty cousin here 335  
Whose place, whose oaks ancestral you behold.  
(Her father was in partnership with mine—  
Does not his purchase look a pedigree?)  
My million will be tails and tassels smart  
To this plump-bodied kite, this house and land 340  
Which, set a-soaring, pulls me, soft as sleep,  
Along life's pleasant meadow,—arm left free  
To lock a friend's in,—whose but yours, old boy?  
Arm in arm glide we over rough and smooth,  
While hand, to pocket held, saves cash from cards. 345  
Now, if you don't esteem ten thousand pounds  
(—Which I shall probably discover snug  
Hid somewhere in the column-corner capped  
With '*Credit*,' based on '*Balance*,'—which, I swear,  
By this time next month I shall quite forget 350  
Whether I lost or won—ten thousand pounds,  
Which at this instant I would give . . . let's see,  
For Galopin—nay, for that Gainsborough  
Sir Richard won't sell, and, if bought by me,  
Would get my glance and praise some twice a  
year,—) 355  
Well, if you don't esteem that price dirt-cheap  
For teaching me Dalmatia was mistake—  
Why then, my last illusion-bubble breaks,  
My one discovered phoenix proves a goose,  
My cleverest of all companions—oh, 360  
Was worth nor ten pence nor ten thousand pounds!  
Come! Be yourself again! So endeth here  
The morning's lesson! Never while life lasts  
Do I touch card again. To breakfast now!  
To bed—I can't say, since you needs must start 365



## THE INN ALBUM

For station early—oh, the down-train still,  
First plan and best plan—townward trip behanged!  
You 're due at your big brother's—pay that debt,  
Then owe me not a farthing! Order eggs—  
And who knows but there 's trout obtainable?" 370

The fine man looks well-nigh malignant: then—

“Sir, please subdue your manner! Debts are  
debts:

I pay mine—debts of this sort—certainly.  
What do I care how you regard your gains,  
Want them or want them not? The thing *I* want 375  
Is—not to have a story circulate  
From club to club—how, bent on clearing out  
Young So-and-so, young So-and-so cleaned me,  
Then set the empty kennel flush again,  
Ignored advantage and forgave his friend— 380  
For why? There was no wringing blood from  
stone!

Oh, don't be savage! You would hold your tongue,  
Bite it in two, as man may; but those small  
Hours in the smoking-room, when instance apt  
Rises to tongue's root, tingles on to tip, 385  
And the thinned company consists of six  
Capital well-known fellows one may trust!  
Next week, it 's in the 'World.' No, thank you  
much.

I owe ten thousand pounds: I 'll pay them!"

“Now,—  
This becomes funny. You 've made friends with  
me: 390

I can't help knowing of the ways and means!  
Or stay! they say your brother closets up  
Correggio's long-lost Leda: if he means  
To give you that, and if you give it me . . .”

## THE INN ALBUM

“*I polished snob off to aristocrat ?* 395  
 You compliment me ! father’s apron still  
 Sticks out from son’s court-vesture ; still silk purse  
 Roughs finger with some bristle sow-ear-born !  
 Well, neither I nor you mean harm at heart !  
 I owe you and shall pay you : which premised, 400  
 Why should what follows sound like flattery ?  
 The fact is—you do compliment too much  
 Your humble master, as I own I am ;  
 You owe me no such thanks as you protest.  
 The polisher needs precious stone no less 405  
 Than precious stone needs polisher : believe  
 I struck no tint from out you but I found  
 Snug lying first ’neath surface hair-breadth-deep !  
 Beside, I liked the exercise : with skill  
 Goes love to show skill for skill’s sake. You see, 410  
 I ’m old and understand things : too absurd  
 It were you pitched and tossed away your life,  
 As diamond were Scotch-pebble ! all the more,  
 That I myself misused a stone of price.  
 Born and bred clever—people used to say 415  
 Clever as most men, if not something more—  
 Yet here I stand a failure, cut awry  
 Or left opaque,—no brilliant named and known.  
 Whate’er my inner stuff, my outside ’s blank ;  
 I ’m nobody—or rather, look that same— 420  
 I ’m—who I am—and know it ; but I hold  
*What* in my hand out for the world to see ?  
 What ministry, what mission, or what book  
 —I ’ll say, book even ? Not a sign of these !  
 I began—laughing—‘*All these when I like !*’ 425  
 I end with—well, you ’ve hit it !—‘*This boy’s cheque*  
*For just as many thousands as he ’ll spare !*’  
 The first—I could, and would not ; your spare cash  
 I would, and could not : have no scruple, pray,  
 But, as I hoped to pocket yours, pouch mine 430

## THE INN ALBUM

—When you are able !”

“ Which is—when to be ?

I ’ve heard, great characters require a fall

Of fortune to show greatness by uprise :

*They touch the ground to jollily rebound,*

Add to the Album ! Let a fellow share

435

Your secret of superiority !

I know, my banker makes the money breed

Money ; I eat and sleep, he simply takes

The dividends and cuts the coupons off,

Sells out, buys in, keeps doubling, tripling cash,

440

While I do nothing but receive and spend.

But you, spontaneous generator, hatch

A wind-egg ; cluck, and forth struts Capital

As Interest to me from egg of gold.

I am grown curious : pay me by all means !

445

How will you make the money ?”

“ Mind your own—

Not my affair. Enough : or money, or

Money’s worth, as the case may be, expect

Ere month’s end,—keep but patient for a month !

Who ’s for a stroll to station ? Ten ’s the time ;

450

Your man, with my things, follow in the trap ;

At stoppage of the down-train, play the arrived

On platform, and you ’ll show the due fatigue

Of the night-journey,—not much sleep,—perhaps,

Your thoughts were on before you—yes, indeed,

455

You join them, being happily awake

With thought’s sole object as she smiling sits

At breakfast-table. I shall dodge meantime

In and out station-precinct, wile away

The hour till up my engine pants and smokes.

460

No doubt, she goes to fetch you. Never fear !

She gets no glance at me, who shame such  
saints !”

# THE INN ALBUM

## II

So, they ring bell, give orders, pay, depart  
Amid profuse acknowledgment from host  
Who well knows what may bring the younger back. 465  
They light cigar, descend in twenty steps  
The "*calm acclivity*," inhale—beyond  
Tobacco's balm—the better smoke of turf  
And wood fire,—cottages at cookery  
I'the morning,—reach the main road straitening on 470  
'Twixt wood and wood, two black walls full of night  
Slow to disperse, though mists thin fast before  
The advancing foot, and leave the flint-dust fine  
Each speck with its fire-sparkle. Presently  
The road's end with the sky's beginning mix 475  
In one magnificence of glare, due East,  
So high the sun rides,—May's the merry month.

They slacken pace : the younger stops abrupt,  
Discards cigar, looks his friend full in face.

"All right ; the station comes in view at end ; 480  
Five minutes from the beech-clump, there you are !  
I say : let's halt, let's borrow yonder gate  
Of its two magpies, sit and have a talk !  
Do let a fellow speak a moment ! More  
I think about and less I like the thing— 485  
No, you must let me ! Now, be good for once !  
Tenthousandpoundsbedonefor,deadanddamned !  
We played for love, not hate : yes, hate ! I hate  
Thinking you beg or borrow or reduce  
To strychnine some poor devil of a lord 490  
Licked at Unlimited Loo. I had the cash  
To lose—you knew that !—lose and none the less  
Whistle to-morrow : it's not every chap  
Affords to take his punishment so well !

## THE INN ALBUM

Now, don't be angry with a friend whose fault 495  
 Is that he thinks—upon my soul, I do—  
 Your head the best head going. Oh, one sees  
 Names in the newspaper—great this, great that,  
 Gladstone, Carlyle, the Laureate :—much I care !  
 Others have their opinion, I keep mine : 500  
 Which means—by right you ought to have the  
 things

I want a head for. Here 's a pretty place,  
 My cousin's place, and presently my place,  
 Not yours ! I 'll tell you how it strikes a man.  
 My cousin 's fond of music and of course 505  
 Plays the piano (it won't be for long !)  
 A brand-new bore she calls a '*semi-grand*,'  
 Rosewood and pearl, that blocks the drawing-room,  
 And cost no end of money. Twice a week  
 Down comes Herr Somebody and seats himself, 510  
 Sets to work teaching—with his teeth on edge—  
 I've watched the rascal. '*Does he play first-rate ?*'  
 I ask : '*I rather think so,*' answers she—  
 '*He's What's-his-Name !*'—'*Why give you lessons*  
*then ?*'—

'*I pay three guineas and the train beside.*'— 515  
 '*This instrument, has he one such at home ?*'—  
 '*He ? Has to practise on a table-top,*  
*When he can't hire the proper thing.*'—'*I see !*  
*You 've the piano, he the skill, and God*  
*The distribution of such gifts.*' So here : 520  
 After your teaching, I shall sit and strum  
 Polkas on this piano of a Place  
 You 'd make resound with *Rule Britannia !*''

“ Thanks !

I don't say but this pretty cousin's place,  
 Appendaged with your million, tempts my hand 525  
 As key-board I might touch with some effect.”

## THE INN ALBUM

“Then, why not have obtained the like? House,  
land,  
Money, are things obtainable, you see,  
By clever head-work: ask my father else!  
You, who teach me, why not have learned, yourself? 530  
Played like Herr Somebody with power to thump  
And flourish and the rest, not bend demure  
Pointing out blunders—‘*Sharp, not natural!*  
*Permit me—on the black key use the thumb!*’  
There’s some fatality, I’m sure! You say 535  
‘*Marry the cousin, that’s your proper move!*’  
And I do use the thumb and hit the sharp:  
You should have listened to your own head’s hint,  
As I to you! The puzzle’s past my power,  
How you have managed—with such stuff, such  
means— 540  
Not to be rich nor great nor happy man:  
Of which three good things where’s a sign at all?  
Just look at Dizzy! Come,—what tripped your  
heels?  
Instruct a goose that boasts wings and can’t fly!  
I wager I have guessed it!—never found 545  
The old solution of the riddle fail!  
‘*Who was the woman?*’ I don’t ask, but—‘*Where*  
*I’ the path of life stood she who tripped you?*’”

“Goose  
You truly are! I own to fifty years.  
Why don’t I interpose and cut out—you? 550  
Compete with five-and-twenty? Age, my boy!”

“Old man, no nonsense!—even to a boy  
That’s ripe at least for rationality  
Rapped into him, as may be mine was, once!  
I’ve had my small adventure lesson me 555  
Over the knuckles!—likely, I forget

## THE INN ALBUM

The sort of figure youth cuts now and then,  
Competing with old shoulders but young head  
Despite the fifty grizzling years !”

“ Aha ?

Then that means—just the bullet in the blade 560  
Which brought Dalmatia on the brain,—that, too,  
Came of a fatal creature ? Can’t pretend  
Now for the first time to surmise as much !  
Make a clean breast ! Recount ! a secret ’s safe  
’Twixt you, me and the gate-post !”

“—Can’t pretend, 565

Neither, to never have surmised your wish !  
It ’s no use,—case of unextracted ball—  
Winces at finger-touching. Let things be !”

“ Ah, if you love your love still ! I hate mine.”

“ I can’t hate.”

“ I won’t teach you ; and won’t tell 570

You, therefore, what you please to ask of me :  
As if I, also, may not have my ache !”

“ My sort of ache ? No, no ! and yet—perhaps !  
All comes of thinking you superior still.  
But live and learn ! I say ! Time ’s up ! Good  
jump ! 575

You old, indeed ! I fancy there ’s a cut  
Across the wood, a grass path : shall we try ?  
It ’s venturesome, however !”

“ Stop, my boy !

Don’t think I ’m stingy of experience ! Life  
—It ’s like this wood we leave. Should you and I 580

## THE INN ALBUM

Go wandering about there, though the gaps  
We went in and came out by were opposed  
As the two poles, still, somehow, all the same,  
By nightfall we should probably have chanced  
On much the same main points of interest— 585  
Both of us measured girth of mossy trunk,  
Stript ivy from its strangled prey, clapped hands  
At squirrel, sent a fir-cone after crow,  
And so forth,—never mind what time betwixt.  
So in our lives; allow I entered mine 590  
Another way than you: 't is possible  
I ended just by knocking head against  
That plaguy low-hung branch yourself began  
By getting bump from; as at last you too  
May stumble o'er that stump which first of all 595  
Bade me walk circumspectly. Head and feet  
Are vulnerable both, and I, foot-sure,  
Forgot that ducking down saves brow from bruise.  
I, early old, played young man four years since  
And failed confoundedly: so, hate alike 600  
Failure and who caused failure,—curse her cant!"

"Oh, I see! You, though somewhat past the  
prime,  
Were taken with a rosebud beauty! Ah—  
But how should chits distinguish? She admired  
Your marvel of a mind, I 'll undertake! 605  
But as to body . . . nay, I mean . . . that is,  
When years have told on face and figure . . ."

"Thanks,  
Mister *Sufficiently-Instructed!* Such  
No doubt was bound to be the consequence  
To suit your self-complacency: she liked 610  
My head enough, but loved some heart beneath  
Some head with plenty of brown hair a-top



## THE INN ALBUM

After my young friend's fashion ! What becomes  
Of that fine speech you made a minute since  
About the man of middle age you found 615  
A formidable peer at twenty-one ?  
So much for your mock-modesty ! and yet  
I back your first against this second sprout  
Of observation, insight, what you please.  
My middle age, Sir, had too much success ! 620  
It 's odd : my case occurred four years ago—  
I finished just while you commenced that turn  
I' the wood of life that takes us to the wealth  
Of honeysuckle, heaped for who can reach.  
Now, I don't boast : it 's bad style, and beside, 625  
The feat proves easier than it looks : I plucked  
Full many a flower unnamed in that bouquet  
(Mostly of peonies and poppies, though !)  
Good nature sticks into my button-hole.  
Therefore it was with nose in want of snuff 630  
Rather than Ess or Psidium, that I chanced  
On what—so far from '*rosebud beauty*' . . . Well—  
She 's dead : at least you never heard her name ;  
She was no courtly creature, had nor birth  
Nor breeding—mere fine-lady-breeding ; but 635  
Oh, such a wonder of a woman ! Grand  
As a Greek statue ! Stick fine clothes on that,  
Style that a Duchess or a Queen,—you know,  
Artists would make an outcry : all the more,  
That she had just a statue's sleepy grace 640  
Which broods o'er its own beauty. Nay, her fault  
(Don't laugh !) was just perfection : for suppose  
Only the little flaw, and I had peeped  
Inside it, learned what soul inside was like.  
At Rome some tourist raised the grit beneath 645  
A Venus' forehead with his whittling-knife—  
I wish,—now,—I had played that brute, brought  
blood

## THE INN ALBUM

To surface from the depths I fancied chalk !  
As it was, her mere face surprised so much  
That I stopped short there, struck on heap, as  
    stares 650  
The cockney stranger at a certain bust  
With drooped eyes,—she 's the thing I have in  
    mind,—  
Down at my Brother's. All sufficient prize—  
Such outside ! Now,—confound me for a prig !—  
Who cares ? I'll make a clean breast once for all ! 655  
Beside, you 've heard the gossip. My life long  
I 've been a woman-liker,—liking means  
Loving and so on. There 's a lengthy list  
By this time I shall have to answer for—  
So say the good folk : and they don't guess half— 660  
For the worst is, let once collecting-itch  
Possess you, and, with perspicacity,  
Keeps growing such a greediness that theft  
Follows at no long distance,—there 's the fact !  
I knew that on my Leporello-list 665  
Might figure this, that, and the other name  
Of feminine desirability,  
But if I happened to desire inscribe,  
Along with these, the only Beautiful—  
Here was the unique specimen to snatch 670  
Or now or never. ' Beautiful ' I said—  
' Beautiful ' say in cold blood,—boiling then  
To tune of '*Haste, secure whate'er the cost*  
*This rarity, die in the act, be damned,*  
*So you complete collection, crown your list !*' 675  
It seemed as though the whole world, once aroused  
By the first notice of such wonder's birth,  
Would break bounds to contest my prize with me  
The first discoverer, should she but emerge  
From that safe den of darkness where she dozed 680  
Till I stole in, that country-parsonage

## THE INN ALBUM

Where, country-parson's daughter, motherless,  
Brotherless, sisterless, for eighteen years  
She had been vegetating lily-like.  
Her father was my brother's tutor, got 685  
The living that way : him I chanced to see—  
Her I saw—her the world would grow one eye  
To see, I felt no sort of doubt at all !  
'Secure her !' cried the devil : '*afterward*  
*Arrange for the disposal of the prize !*' 690  
The devil's doing ! yet I seem to think—  
Now, when all's done,—think with '*a head reposed*'  
In French phrase—hope I think I meant to do  
All requisite for such a rarity  
When I should be at leisure, have due time 695  
To learn requirement. But in evil day—  
Bless me, at week's end, long as any year,  
The father must begin '*Young Somebody,*  
*Much recommended—for I break a rule—*  
*Comes here to read, next Long Vacation.*' '*Young !*' 700  
That did it. Had the epithet been '*rich,*'  
'*Noble,*' '*a genius,*' even '*handsome,*'—but  
—'*Young*' !"

"I say—just a word ! I want to know—  
You are not married ?"

"I ?"

"Nor ever were ?"

"Never ! Why ?"

"Oh, then—never mind ! Go on ! 705  
I had a reason for the question."

"Come,—  
You could not be the young man ?"

## THE INN ALBUM

“No, indeed !  
Certainly—if you never married her !”

“That I did not : and there ’s the curse, you ’ll  
see !

Nay, all of it ’s one curse, my life’s mistake 710  
Which, nourished with manure that ’s warranted  
To make the plant bear wisdom, blew out full  
In folly beyond field-flower-foolishness !  
The lies I used to tell my womankind,  
Knowing they disbelieved me all the time 715  
Though they required my lies, their decent due,  
This woman—not so much believed, I ’ll say,  
As just anticipated from my mouth :  
Since being true, devoted, constant—she  
Found constancy, devotion, truth, the plain 720  
And easy commonplace of character.  
No mock-heroics but seemed natural  
To her who underneath the face, I knew  
Was fairness’ self, possessed a heart, I judged  
Must correspond in folly just as far 725  
Beyond the common,—and a mind to match,—  
Not made to puzzle conjurers like me  
Who, therein, proved the fool who fronts you, Sir,  
And begs leave to cut short the ugly rest !  
‘*Trust me !*’ I said : she trusted. ‘*Marry me !*’ 730  
Or rather, ‘*We are married : when, the rite ?*’  
That brought on the collector’s next-day qualm  
At counting acquisition’s cost. There lay  
My marvel, there my purse more light by much  
Because of its late lie-expenditure : 735  
Ill-judged such moment to make fresh demand—  
To cage as well as catch my rarity !  
So, I began explaining. At first word  
Outbroke the horror. ‘*Then, my truths were lies !*’  
I tell you, such an outbreak, such new strange 740

## THE INN ALBUM

All-unsuspected revelation—soul  
As supernaturally grand as face  
Was fair beyond example—that at once  
Either I lost—or, if it please you, found  
My senses,—stammered somehow—‘*Jest! and*  
*now,* 745  
*Earnest! Forget all else but—heart has loved,*  
*Does love, shall love you ever! take the hand!’*  
Not she! no marriage for superb disdain,  
Contempt incarnate!”

“Yes, it’s different,—  
It’s only like in being four years since. 750  
I see now!”

“Well, what did disdain do next,  
Think you?”

“That’s past me: did not marry you!—  
That’s the main thing I care for, I suppose.  
Turned nun, or what?”

“Why, married in a month  
Some parson, some smug crop-haired smooth-  
chinned sort 755  
Of curate-creature, I suspect,—dived down,  
Down, deeper still, and came up somewhere else—  
I don’t know where—I’ve not tried much to know,—  
In short, she’s happy: what the clodpoles call  
‘Countrified’ with a vengeance! leads the life 760  
Respectable and all that drives you mad:  
Still—where, I don’t know, and that’s best for both.”

“Well, that she did not like you, I conceive.  
But why should you hate her, I want to know?”

“My good young friend,—because or her or else 765  
Malicious Providence I have to hate.

## THE INN ALBUM

For, what I tell you proved the turning-point  
Of my whole life and fortune toward success  
Or failure. If I drown, I lay the fault  
Much on myself who caught at reed not rope, 770  
But more on reed which, with a packthread's pith,  
Had buoyed me till the minute's cramp could thaw  
And I strike out afresh and so be saved.  
It's easy saying—I had sunk before,  
Disqualified myself by idle days 775  
And busy nights, long since, from holding hard  
On cable, even, had fate cast me such !  
You boys don't know how many times men fail  
Perforce o' the little to succeed i' the large,  
Husband their strength, let slip the petty prey, 780  
Collect the whole power for the final pounce.  
My fault was the mistaking man's main prize  
For intermediate boy's diversion ; clap  
Of boyish hands here frightened game away  
Which, once gone, goes for ever. Oh, at first 785  
I took the anger easily, nor much  
Minded the anguish—having learned that storms  
Subside, and teapot-tempests are akin.  
Time would arrange things, mend whate'er might be  
Somewhat amiss ; precipitation, eh ? 790  
Reason and rhyme prompt—reparation ! Tiffs  
End properly in marriage and a dance !  
I said ' We 'll marry, make the past a blank '—  
And never was such damnable mistake !  
That interview, that laying bare my soul, 795  
As it was first, so was it last chance—one  
And only. Did I write ? Back letter came  
Unopened as it went. Inexorable  
She fled, I don't know where, consoled herself  
With the smug curate-creature : chop and change ! 800  
Sure am I, when she told her shaveling all  
His Magdalen's adventure, tears were shed,

## THE INN ALBUM

Forgiveness evangelically shown,  
'Loose hair and lifted eye,'—as someone says.  
And now, he's worshipped for his pains, the sneak!" 805

'Well, but your turning-point of life,—what's here  
To hinder you contesting Finsbury  
With Orton, next election? I don't see . . ."

"Not you! But *I* see. Slowly, surely, creeps  
Day by day o'er me the conviction—here 810  
Was life's prize grasped at, gained, and then let go!  
—That with her—may be, for her—I had felt  
Ice in me melt, grow steam, drive to effect  
Any or all the fancies sluggish here  
I' the head that needs the hand she would not take 815  
And I shall never lift now. Lo, your wood—  
Its turnings which I likened life to! Well,—  
There she stands, ending every avenue,  
Her visionary presence on each goal  
I might have gained had we kept side by side! 820  
Still string nerve and strike foot? Her frown  
forbids :

The steam congeals once more : I 'm old again !  
Therefore I hate myself—but how much worse  
Do not I hate who would not understand,  
Let me repair things—no, but sent a-slide 825  
My folly falteringly, stumblingly  
Down, down and deeper down until I drop  
Upon—the need of your ten thousand pounds  
And consequently loss of mine ! I lose  
Character, cash, nay, common-sense itself 830  
Recounting such a lengthy cock-and-bull  
Adventure—lose my temper in the act . . ."

"And lose beside,—if I may supplement  
The list of losses,—train and ten-o'clock !

## THE INN ALBUM

Hark, pant and puff, there travels the swart sign ! 835  
So much the better ! You 're my captive now !  
I 'm glad you trust a fellow : friends grow thick  
This way—that 's twice said ; we were thickish,  
    though,  
Even last night, and, ere night comes again,  
I prophesy good luck to both of us ! 840  
For see now !—back to '*balmy eminence*'  
Or '*calm acclivity*,' or what 's the word !  
Bestow you there an hour, concoct at ease  
A sonnet for the Album, while I put  
Bold face on, best foot forward, make for house, 845  
March in to aunt and niece, and tell the truth—  
(Even white-lying goes against my taste  
After your little story). Oh, the niece  
Is rationality itself ! The aunt—  
If she 's amenable to reason too— 850  
Why, you stopped short to pay her due respect,  
And let the Duke wait (I 'll work well the Duke).  
If she grows gracious, I return for you ;  
If thunder 's in the air, why—bear your doom,  
Dine on rump-steaks and port, and shake the dust 855  
Of aunty from your shoes as off you go  
By evening-train, nor give the thing a thought  
How you shall pay me—that 's as sure as fate,  
Old fellow ! Off with you, face left about !  
Yonder 's the path I have to pad. You see, 860  
I 'm in good spirits, God knows why ! Perhaps  
Because the woman did not marry you  
—Who look so hard at me,—and have the right,  
One must be fair and own."

The two stand still

Under an oak.

"Look here !" resumes the youth. 865

"I never quite knew how I came to like



## THE INN ALBUM

You—so much—whom I ought not court at all :  
 Nor how you had a leaning just to me  
 Who am assuredly not worth your pains.  
 For there must needs be plenty such as you 870  
 Somewhere about,—although I can't say where,—  
 Able and willing to teach all you know ;  
 While—how can you have missed a score like me  
 With money and no wit, precisely each  
 A pupil for your purpose, were it—ease 875  
 Fool's poke of tutor's *honorarium*-fee ?  
 And yet, howe'er it came about, I felt  
 At once my master : you as prompt descried  
 Your man, I warrant, so was bargain struck.  
 Now, these same lines of liking, loving, run 880  
 Sometimes so close together they converge—  
 Life's great adventures—you know what I mean—  
 In people. Do you know, as you advanced,  
 It got to be uncommonly like fact  
 We two had fallen in with—liked and loved 885  
 Just the same woman in our different ways ?  
 I began life—poor groundling as I prove—  
 Winged and ambitious to fly high : why not ?  
 There's something in ' Don Quixote ' to the point,  
 My shrewd old father used to quote and praise— 890  
 '*Am I born man ?*' asks Sancho : '*being man,*  
*By possibility I may be Pope !*'  
 So, Pope I meant to make myself, by step  
 And step, whereof the first should be to find  
 A perfect woman ; and I tell you this— 895  
 If what I fixed on, in the order due  
 Of undertakings, as next step, had first  
 Of all disposed itself to suit my tread,  
 And I had been, the day I came of age,  
 Returned at head of poll for Westminster 900  
 —Nay, and moreover summoned by the Queen  
 At week's end, when my maiden-speech bore fruit

## THE INN ALBUM

To form and head a Tory ministry—  
 It would not have seemed stranger, no, nor been  
 More strange to me, as now I estimate, 905  
 Than what did happen—sober truth, no dream.  
 I saw my wonder of a woman,—laugh,  
 I 'm past that!—in Commemoration-week.  
 A plenty have I seen since, fair and foul,—  
 With eyes, too, helped by your sagacious wink ; 910  
 But one to match that marvel—no least trace,  
 Least touch of kinship and community !  
 The end was—I did somehow state the fact,  
 Did, with no matter what imperfect words,  
 One way or other give to understand 915  
 That woman, soul and body were her slave  
 Would she but take, but try them—any test  
 Of will, and some poor test of power beside :  
 So did the strings within my brain grow tense  
 And capable of . . . hang similitudes ! 920  
 She answered kindly but beyond appeal.  
*'No sort of hope for me, who came too late.*  
*She was another's. Love went—mine to her,*  
*Hers just as loyally to someone else.'*  
 Of course ! I might expect it ! Nature's law— 925  
 Given the peerless woman, certainly  
 Somewhere shall be the peerless man to match !  
 I acquiesced at once, submitted me  
 In something of a stupor, went my way.  
 I fancy there had been some talk before 930  
 Of somebody—her father or the like—  
 To coach me in the holidays,—that 's how  
 I came to get the sight and speech of her,—  
 But I had sense enough to break off sharp,  
 Save both of us the pain."

“Quite right there !”

“Eh ? 935

## THE INN ALBUM

Quite wrong, it happens! Now comes worst of all!  
 Yes, I did sulk aloof and let alone  
 The lovers—*I* disturb the angel-mates?"

"Seraph paired off with cherub!"

"Thank you! While

I never plucked up courage to inquire 940  
 Who he was, even,—certain-sure of this,  
 That nobody I knew of had blue wings  
 And wore a star-crown as he needs must do,—  
 Some little lady,—plainish, pock-marked girl,—  
 Finds out my secret in my woeful face, 945  
 Comes up to me at the Apollo Ball,  
 And pityingly pours her wine and oil  
 This way into the wound: '*Dear f-f-friend,*  
*Why waste affection thus on—must I say,*  
*A somewhat worthless object? Who's her choice—* 950  
*Irrevocable as deliberate—*  
*Out of the wide world? I shall name no names—*  
*But there's a person in society,*  
*Who, blessed with rank and talent, has grown grey*  
*In idleness and sin of every sort* 955  
*Except hypocrisy: he's thrice her age,*  
*A by-word for "successes with the sex"*  
*As the French say—and, as we ought to say,*  
*Consummately a liar and a rogue,*  
*Since—show me where's the woman won without* 960  
*The help of this one lie which she believes—*  
*That—never mind how things have come to pass,*  
*And let who loves have loved a thousand times—*  
*All the same he now loves her only, loves*  
*Her ever! if by "won" you just mean "sold,"* 965  
*That's quite another compact. Well, this scamp,*  
*Continuing descent from bad to worse,*  
*Must leave his fine and fashionable prey*

## THE INN ALBUM

*(Who—fathered, brothered, husbanded,—are hedged  
 About with thorny danger) and apply* 970  
*His arts to this poor country ignorance  
 Who sees forthwith in the first rag of man  
 Her model hero ! Why continue waste  
 On such a woman treasures of a heart  
 Would yet find solace,—yes, my f-f-friend—* 975  
*In some congenial—fiddle-diddle-dee ? ’ ’ ’*

“ Pray, is the pleasant gentleman described  
 Exact the portrait which my ‘ f-f-friends ’  
 Recognize as so like ? ’ T is evident  
 You half surmised the sweet original 980  
 Could be no other than myself, just now !  
 Your stop and start were flattering ! ”

“ Of course  
 Caricature ’s allowed for in a sketch !  
 The longish nose becomes a foot in length,  
 The swarthy cheek gets copper-coloured,—still, 985  
 Prominent beak and dark-hued skin are facts :  
 And ‘ parson’s daughter ’—‘ young man coachable ’—  
 ‘ Elderly party ’—‘ four years since ’—were facts  
 To fasten on, a moment ! Marriage, though—  
 That made the difference, I hope.”

“ All right ! 990  
 I never married ; wish I had—and then  
 Unwish it : people kill their wives, sometimes !  
 I hate my mistress, but I ’m murder-free.  
 In your case, where’s the grievance ? You came last,  
 The earlier bird picked up the worm. Suppose 995  
 You, in the glory of your twenty-one,  
 Had happened to precede myself ! ’ t is odds  
 But this gigantic juvenility,  
 This offering of a big arm’s bony hand—

## THE INN ALBUM

I 'd rather shake than feel shake me, I know— 1000  
 Had moved *my* dainty mistress to admire  
 An altogether new Ideal—deem  
 Idolatry less due to life's decline  
 Productive of experience, powers mature  
 By dint of usage, the made man—no boy 1005  
 That 's all to make! I was the earlier bird—  
 And what I found, I let fall; what you missed  
 Who is the fool that blames you for?"

"Myself—

For nothing, everything! For finding out  
 She, whom I worshipped, was a worshipper 1010  
 In turn of . . . but why stir up settled mud?  
 She married him—the fifty-years-old rake—  
 How you have teased the talk from me! At last  
 My secret 's told you. I inquired no more,  
 Nay, stopped ears when informants unshut mouth; 1015  
 Enough that she and he live, deuce take where,  
 Married and happy, or else miserable—  
 It 's 'Cut-the-pack;' she turned up ace or knave,  
 And I left Oxford, England, dug my hole  
 Out in Dalmatia, till you drew me thence 1020  
 Badger-like,—' *Back to London* ' was the word—  
 ' *Do things, a many, there, you fancy hard,*  
*I 'll undertake are easy!* '—the advice.  
 I took it, had my twelvemonth's fling with you—  
 (Little hand holding large hand pretty tight 1025  
 For all its delicacy—eh, my lord?),  
 Until when, t' other day, I got a turn  
 Somehow and gave up tired: and ' *Rest!* ' bade you,  
 ' *Marry your cousin, double your estate,*  
*And take your ease by all means!* ' So, I loll 1030  
 On this the springy sofa, mine next month—  
 Or should loll, but that you must needs beat rough  
 The very down you spread me out so smooth.

## THE INN ALBUM

I wish this confidence were still to make !  
 Ten thousand pounds? You owe me twice the sum 1035  
 For stirring up the black depths ! There 's repose  
 Or, at least, silence when misfortune seems  
 All that one has to bear ; but folly—yes,  
 Folly, it all was ! Fool to be so meek,  
 So humble,—such a coward rather say ! 1040  
 Fool, to adore the adorer of a fool !  
 Not to have faced him, tried (a useful hint)  
 My big and bony, here, against the bunch  
 Of lily-coloured five with signet-ring,  
 Most like, for little-finger's sole defence— 1045  
 Much as you flaunt the blazon there ! I grind  
 My teeth, that bite my very heart, to think—  
 To know I might have made that woman mine  
 But for the folly of the coward—know—  
 Or what 's the good of my apprenticeship 1050  
 This twelvemonth to a master in the art ?  
 Mine—had she been mine—just one moment mine  
 For honour, for dishonour—anyhow,  
 So that my life, instead of stagnant . . . Well,  
 You've poked and proved stagnation is not sleep— 1055  
 Hang you ! ”

“ Hang *you* for an ungrateful goose !

All this means—I who since I knew you first  
 Have helped you to conceit yourself this cock  
 O' the dunghill with all hens to pick and choose—  
 Ought to have helped you when shell first was  
     chipped 1060  
 By chick that wanted prompting ‘ *Use the spur !* ’  
 While I was elsewhere putting mine to use.  
 As well might I blame you who kept aloof,  
 Seeing you could not guess I was alive,  
 Never advised me ‘ *Do as I have done—* 1065  
*Reverence such a jewel as your luck*

## THE INN ALBUM

*Has scratched up to enrich unworthiness !'*

As your behaviour was should mine have been,  
—Faults which we both, too late, are sorry for :  
Opposite ages, each with its mistake !

1070

'*If youth but would—if age but could,*' you know.  
Don't let us quarrel. Come, we 're—young and  
old—

Neither so badly off. Go you your way,  
Cut to the Cousin ! I 'll to Inn, await  
The issue of diplomacy with Aunt,  
And wait my hour on '*calm acclivity*'  
In rumination manifold—perhaps  
About ten thousand pounds I have to pay !"

1075

### III

Now, as the elder lights the fresh cigar  
Conducive to resource, and saunteringly  
Betakes him to the left-hand backward path,—  
While, much sedate, the younger strides away  
To right and makes for—islanded in lawn  
And edged with shrubbery—the brilliant bit  
Of Barry's building that 's the Place,—a pair  
Of women, at this nick of time, one young,  
One very young, are ushered with due pomp  
Into the same Inn-parlour—" *disengaged*  
*Entirely now !*" the obsequious landlord smiles,  
" *Since the late occupants—whereof but one*  
*Was quite a stranger*"—(smile enforced by bow)  
" *Left, a full two hours since, to catch the train,*  
*Probably for the stranger's sake !*" (Bow, smile,  
And backing out from door soft-closed behind.)

1080

1085

1090

Woman and girl, the two, alone inside,  
Begin their talk : the girl, with sparkling eyes—  
" Oh, I forewent him purposely ! but you,

1095

## THE INN ALBUM

Who joined at—journeyed from the Junction  
here—

I wonder how he failed your notice. Few  
Stop at our station : fellow-passengers 1100  
Assuredly you were—I saw indeed  
His servant, therefore he arrived all right.  
I wanted, you know why, to have you safe  
Inside here first of all, so dodged about  
The dark end of the platform ; that 's his way— 1105  
To swing from station straight to avenue  
And stride the half a mile for exercise.  
I fancied you might notice the huge boy.  
He soon gets o'er the distance ; at the house  
He 'll hear I went to meet him and have missed ; 1110  
He 'll wait. No minute of the hour 's too much  
Meantime for our preliminary talk :  
First word of which must be—O good beyond  
Expression of all goodness—you to come !”

The elder, the superb one, answers slow. 1115

“There was no helping that. You called for me,  
Cried, rather : and my old heart answered you.  
Still, thank me ! since the effort breaks a vow—  
At least, a promise to myself.”

“I know !  
How selfish get you happy folk to be ! 1120  
If I should love my husband, must I needs  
Sacrifice straightway all the world to him,  
As you do ? Must I never dare leave house  
On this dread Arctic expedition, out  
And in again, six mortal hours, though you, 1125  
You even, my own friend for evermore,  
Adjure me—fast your friend till rude love pushed  
Poor friendship from her vantage—just to grant



## THE INN ALBUM

The quarter of a whole day's company  
And counsel? This makes counsel so much more 1130  
Need and necessity. For'here 's my block  
Of stumbling: in the face of happiness  
So absolute, fear chills me. If such change  
In heart be but love's easy consequence,  
Do I love? If to marry mean—let go 1135  
All I now live for, should my marriage be?"

The other never once has ceased to gaze  
On the great elm-tree in the open, posed  
Placidly full in front, smooth bole, broad branch,  
And leafage, one green plenitude of May. 1140  
The gathered thought runs into speech at last.

"O you exceeding beauty, bosomful  
Of lights and shades, murmurs and silences,  
Sun-warmth, dew-coolness,—squirrel, bee and  
bird,  
High, higher, highest, till the blue proclaims 1145  
*'Leave earth, there 's nothing better till next step  
Heavenward!'*—so, off flies what has wings to  
help!"

And henceforth they alternate. Says the girl—

"That 's saved then: marriage spares the early  
taste."

"Four years now, since my eye took note of tree!" 1150

"If I had seen no other tree but this  
My life long, while yourself came straight, you  
said,  
From tree which overstretched you and was just  
One fairy tent with pitcher-leaves that held

## THE INN ALBUM

Wine, and a flowery wealth of suns and moons, 1155  
And magic fruits whereon the angels feed—  
I looking out of window on a tree  
Like yonder—otherwise well-known, much-liked,  
Yet just an English ordinary elm—  
What marvel if you cured me of conceit 1160  
My elm's bird-bee-and-squirrel tenantry  
Was quite the proud possession I supposed?  
And there is evidence you tell me true.  
The fairy marriage-tree reports itself  
Good guardian of the perfect face and form, 1165  
Fruits of four years' protection! Married friend,  
You are more beautiful than ever!"

“Yes:

I think that likely. I could well dispense  
With all thought fair in feature, mine or no,  
Leave but enough of face to know me by— 1170  
With all found fresh in youth except such strength  
As lets a life-long labour earn repose  
Death sells at just that price, they say; and so,  
Possibly, what I care not for, I keep.”

“How you must know he loves you! Chill,  
before, 1175  
Fear sinks to freezing. Could I sacrifice—  
Assured my lover simply loves my soul—  
One nose-breadth of fair feature? No, indeed!  
Your own love . . .”

“The preliminary hour—  
Don't waste it!”

“But I can't begin at once! 1180  
The angel's self that comes to hear me speak  
Drives away all the care about the speech.

## THE INN ALBUM

What an angelic mystery you are—  
Now—that is certain ! when I knew you first,  
No break of halo and no bud of wing ! 1185  
I thought I knew you, saw you, round and through,  
Like a glass ball ; suddenly, four years since,  
You vanished, how and whither ? Mystery !  
Wherefore ? No mystery at all : you loved,  
Were loved again, and left the world of course : 1190  
Who would not ? Lapped four years in fairyland,  
Out comes, by no less wonderful a chance,  
The changeling, touched athwart her trellised bliss  
Of blush-rose bower by just the old friend's voice  
That 's now struck dumb at her own potency. 1195  
/ talk of my small fortunes ? Tell me yours  
Rather ! The fool I ever was—I am,  
You see that : the true friend you ever had,  
You have, you also recognize. Perhaps,  
Giving you all the love of all my heart, 1200  
Nature, that 's niggard in me, has denied  
The after-birth of love there 's someone claims  
—This huge boy, swinging up the avenue ;  
And I want counsel : is defect in me,  
Or him who has no right to raise the love ? 1205  
My cousin asks my hand : he 's young enough,  
Handsome,—my maid thinks,—manly 's more the  
word :  
He asked my leave to '*drop*' the elm-tree there,  
Some morning before breakfast. Gentleness  
Goes with the strength, of course. He's honest too, 1210  
Limpidly truthful. For ability—  
All 's in the rough yet. His first taste of life  
Seems to have somehow gone against the tongue :  
He travelled, tried things—came back, tried still  
more—  
He says he 's sick of all. He 's fond of me 1215  
After a certain careless-earnest way

## THE INN ALBUM

I like : the iron 's crude,—no polished steel  
 Somebody forged before me. I am rich—  
 That 's not the reason, he 's far richer : no,  
 Nor is it that he thinks me pretty,—frank 1220  
 Undoubtedly on that point ! He saw once  
 The pink of face-perfection—oh, not you—  
 Content yourself, my beauty !—for she proved  
 So thoroughly a cheat, his charmer . . . nay,  
 He runs into extremes, I 'll say at once, 1225  
 Lest you say ! Well, I understand he wants  
 Someone to serve, something to do : and both  
 Requisites so abound in me and mine  
 That here 's the obstacle which stops consent :  
 The smoothness is too smooth, and I mistrust 1230  
 The unseen cat beneath the counterpane.  
 Therefore I thought '*Would she but judge for me,  
 Who, judging for herself succeeded so !*'  
 Do I love him, does he love me, do both  
 Mistake for knowledge—easy ignorance ? 1235  
 Appeal to its proficient in each art !  
 I got rough-smooth through a piano-piece,  
 Rattled away last week till tutor came,  
 Heard me to end, then grunted '*Ach, mein Gott !  
 Sagen Sie "easy" ? Every note is wrong.* 1240  
*All thumped mit wrist : we 'll trouble fingers now.  
 The Fräulein will please roll up Raff again  
 And exercise at Czerny for one month !*  
 Am I to roll up cousin, exercise  
 At Trollope's novels for one month ? Pronounce !" 1245

"Now, place each in the right position first,  
 Adviser and advised one ! I perhaps  
 Am three—nay, four years older ; am, beside,  
 A wife : advantages—to balance which,  
 You have a full fresh joyous sense of life 1250  
 That finds you out life's fit food everywhere,

## THE INN ALBUM

Detects enjoyment where I, slow and dull,  
Fumble at fault. Already, these four years,  
Your merest glimpses at the world without  
Have shown you more than ever met my gaze ; 1255  
And now, by joyance you inspire joy,—learn  
While you profess to teach, and teach, although  
Avowedly a learner. I am dazed  
Like any owl by sunshine which just sets  
The sparrow preening plumage ! Here 's to spy 1260  
—Your cousin ! You have scanned him all your life,  
Little or much ; I never saw his face.  
You have determined on a marriage—used  
Deliberation therefore—I 'll believe  
No otherwise, with opportunity 1265  
For judgment so abounding ! Here stand I—  
Summoned to give my sentence, for a whim,  
(Well, at first cloud-fleck thrown athwart your blue)  
Judge what is strangeness' self to me,—say '*Wed!*'  
Or '*Wed not !*' whom you promise I shall judge 1270  
Presently, at propitious lunch-time, just  
While he carves chicken ! Sends he leg for wing?  
That revelation into character  
And conduct must suffice me ! Quite as well  
Consult with yonder solitary crow 1275  
That eyes us from your elm-top !"

“Still the same !

Do you remember, at the library  
We saw together somewhere, those two books  
Somebody said were noticeworthy ? One  
Lay wide on table, sprawled its painted leaves 1280  
For all the world's inspection ; shut on shelf  
Reclined the other volume, closed, clasped, locked—  
Clear to be let alone. Which page had we  
Preferred the turning over of ? You were,  
Are, ever will be the locked lady, hold 1285

## THE INN ALBUM

Inside you secrets written,—soul-absorbed,  
My ink upon your blotting-paper. I—  
What trace of you have I to show in turn ?  
Delicate secrets ! No one juvenile  
Ever essayed at croquet and performed 1290  
Superiorly but I confided you  
The sort of hat he wore and hair it held.  
While you ? One day a calm note comes by post :  
' *I am just married, you may like to hear.*'  
Most men would hate you, or they ought ; we love 1295  
What we fear,—*I* do ! ' *Cold* ' I shall expect  
My cousin calls you. I—dislike not him,  
But (if I comprehend what loving means)  
Love you immeasurably more—more—more  
Than even he who, loving you his wife, 1300  
Would turn up nose at who impertinent,  
Frivolous, forward—*loves* that excellence  
Of all the earth he bows in worship to !  
And who 's this paragon of privilege ?  
Simply a country parson : his the charm 1305  
That worked the miracle ! Oh, too absurd  
But that you stand before me as you stand !  
Such beauty does prove something, everything !  
Beauty 's the prize-flower which dispenses eye  
From peering into what has nourished root— 1310  
Dew or manure : the plant best knows its place.  
Enough, from teaching youth and tending age  
And hearing sermons,—haply writing tracts,—  
From such strange love-besprinkled compost, lo,  
Out blows this triumph ! Therefore love 's the soil 1315  
Plants find or fail of. You, with wit to find,  
Exercise wit on the old friend's behalf,  
Keep me from failure ! Scan and scrutinize  
This cousin ! Surely he 's as worth your pains  
To study as my elm-tree, crow and all, 1320  
You still keep staring at. I read your thoughts."

## THE INN ALBUM

“At last?”

“At first! ‘*Would, tree, a-top of thee  
I winged were, like crow perched moveless there,  
And so could straightway soar, escape this bore,  
Back to my nest where broods whom I love best—* 1325  
*The parson o’er his parish—garish—rarish—*  
Oh I could bring the rhyme in if I tried:  
The Album here inspires me! Quite apart  
From lyrical expression, have I read  
The stare aright, and sings not soul just so?” 1330

“Or rather so? ‘*Cool comfortable elm  
That men make coffins out of,—none for me  
At thy expense, so thou permit I glide  
Under thy ferny feet, and there sleep, sleep,  
Nor dread awaking though in heaven itself!*’ ” 1335

The younger looks with face struck sudden white.  
The elder answers its inquiry.

“Dear,  
You are a guesser, not a ‘*clairvoyante*.’  
I’ll so far open you the locked and shelved  
Volume, my soul, that you desire to see, 1340  
As let you profit by the title-page——”

“*Paradise Lost?*”

“*Inferno!*—All which comes  
Of tempting me to break my vow. Stop here!  
Friend, whom I love the best in the whole world,  
Come at your call, be sure that I will do 1345  
All your requirement—see and say my mind.  
It may be that by sad apprenticeship  
I have a keener sense: I’ll task the same.  
Only indulge me—here let sight and speech

## THE INN ALBUM

Happen—this Inn is neutral ground, you know ! 1350  
I cannot visit the old house and home,  
Encounter the old sociality  
Abjured for ever. Peril quite enough  
In even this first—last, I pray it prove—  
Renunciation of my solitude ! 1355  
Back, you, to house and cousin ! Leave me here,  
Who want no entertainment, carry still  
My occupation with me. While I watch  
The shadow inching round those ferny feet,  
Tell him ‘ *A school-friend wants a word with me* 1360  
*Up at the inn : time, tide and train won't wait :*  
*I must go see her—on and off again—*  
*You 'll keep me company ? ’* Ten minutes' talk,  
With you in presence, ten more afterward  
With who, alone, convoys me station-bound, 1365  
And I see clearly—and say honestly  
To-morrow : pen shall play tongue's part, you know.  
Go—quick ! for I have made our hand-in-hand  
Return impossible. So scared you look,—  
If cousin does not greet you with ‘ *What ghost* 1370  
*Has crossed your path ? ’* I set him down obtuse.”

And after one more look, with face still white,  
The younger does go, while the elder stands  
Occupied by the elm at window there.

### IV

Occupied by the elm ; and, as its shade 1375  
Has crept clock-hand-wise till it ticks at fern  
Five inches further to the South, the door  
Opens abruptly, someone enters sharp,  
The elder man returned to wait the youth :  
Never observes the room's new occupant, 1380  
Throws hat on table, stoops quick, elbow-propped



## THE INN ALBUM

Over the Album wide there, bends down brow  
 A cogitative minute, whistles shrill,  
 Then,—with a cheery-hopeless laugh-and-lose  
 Air of defiance to fate visibly 1385  
 Casting the toils about him,—mouths once more  
 “*Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot !*”  
 Then clasps-to cover, sends book spinning off  
 T’ other side table, looks up, starts erect  
 Full-face with her who,—roused from that abstruse 1390  
 Question, “*Will next tick tip the fern or no ?*”,—  
 Fronts him as fully.

All her languor breaks,  
 Away withers at once the weariness  
 From the black-blooded brow, anger and hate  
 Convulse. Speech follows slower, but at last— 1395

“You here ! I felt, I knew it would befall !  
 Knew, by some subtle undividable  
 Trick of the trickster, I should, silly-sooth,  
 Late or soon, somehow be allured to leave  
 Safe hiding and come take of him arrears, 1400  
 My torment due on four years’ respite ! Time  
 Topluckthebird’shealedbreastofdowno’erwound !  
 Have your success ! Be satisfied this sole  
 Seeing you has undone all heaven could do  
 These four years, puts me back to you and hell ! 1405  
 What will next trick be, next success ? No doubt  
 When I shall think to glide into the grave,  
 There will you wait disguised as beckoning Death,  
 And catch and capture me for evermore !  
 But, God, though I am nothing, be thou all ! 1410  
 Contest him for me ! Strive, for he is strong !”

Already his surprise dies palely out  
 In laugh of acquiescing impotence.  
 He neither gasps nor hisses : calm and plain—

## THE INN ALBUM

“I also felt and knew—but otherwise ! 1415  
You out of hand and sight and care of me  
These four years, whom I felt, knew, all the while . . .  
Oh, it ’s no superstition ! It ’s a gift  
O’ the gamester that he snuffs the unseen powers  
Which help or harm him. Well I knew what lurked, 1420  
Lay perdue paralysing me,—drugged, drowsed  
And damnified my soul and body both !  
Down and down, see where you have dragged me to,  
You and your malice ! I was, four years since,  
—Well, a poor creature ! I become a knave. 1425  
I squandered my own pence : I plump my purse  
With other people’s pounds. I practised play  
Because I liked it : play turns labour now  
Because there ’s profit also in the sport.  
I gamed with men of equal age and craft : 1430  
I steal here with a boy as green as grass  
Whom I have tightened hold on slow and sure  
This long while, just to bring about to-day  
When the boy beats me hollow, buries me  
In ruin who was sure to beggar him. 1435  
O time indeed I should look up and laugh  
‘*Surely she closes on me !*’ Here you stand !”  
And stand she does : while volubility,  
With him, keeps on the increase, for his tongue  
After long locking-up is loosed for once. 1440  
“Certain the taunt is happy !” he resumes :  
“So, I it was allured you—only I  
—I, and none other—to this spectacle—  
Your triumph, my despair—you woman-fiend  
That front me ! Well, I have my wish, then ! See 1445  
The low wide brow oppressed by sweeps of hair  
Darker and darker as they coil and swathe  
The crowned corpse-wanness whence the eyes  
burn black

## THE INN ALBUM

Not asleep now ! not pin-points dwarfed beneath  
Either great bridging eyebrow—poor blank beads— 1450  
Babies, I 've pleased to pity in my time :  
How they protrude and glow immense with hate !  
The long triumphant nose attains—retains  
Just the perfection ; and there 's scarlet-skein  
My ancient enemy, her lip and lip, 1455  
Sense-free, sense-frighting lips clenched cold and  
bold

Because of chin, that based resolve beneath !  
Then the columnar neck completes the whole  
Greek-sculpture-baffling body ! Do I see ?  
Can I observe ? You wait next word to come ? 1460  
Well, wait and want ! since no one blight I bid  
Consume one least perfection. Each and all,  
As they are rightly shocking now to me,  
So may they still continue ! Value them ?  
Ay, as the vendor knows the money-worth 1465  
Of his Greek statue, fools aspire to buy,  
And he to see the back of ! Let us laugh !  
You have absolved me from my sin at least !  
You stand stout, strong, in the rude health of  
hate,

No touch of the tame timid nullity 1470  
My cowardice, forsooth, has practised on !  
Ay, while you seemed to hint some fine fifth act  
Of tragedy should freeze blood, end the farce,  
I never doubted all was joke. I kept,  
May be, an eye alert on paragraphs, 1475  
Newspaper-notice,—let no inquest slip,  
Accident, disappearance : sound and safe  
Were you, my victim, not of mind to die !  
So, my worst fancy that could spoil the smooth  
Of pillow, and arrest descent of sleep 1480  
Was, *Into what dim hole can she have dived,*  
*She and her wrongs, her woe that 's wearing flesh*

## THE INN ALBUM

*And blood away ? ' Whereas, see, sorrow swells !  
 Or, fattened, fulsome, have you fed on me,  
 Sucked out my substance ? How much gloss, I*  
     pray,  
 O'erbloomed those hair-swathes when there crept  
     from you  
 To me that craze, else unaccountable,  
 Which urged me to contest our county-seat  
 With whom but my own brother's nominee ?  
 Did that mouth's pulp glow ruby from carmine  
 While I misused my moment, pushed,—one  
     word,—  
 One hair's breadth more of gesture,—idiot-like  
 Past passion, floundered on to the grotesque,  
 And lost the heiress in a grin ? At least,  
 You made no such mistake ! You tickled fish,  
 Landed your prize the true artistic way !  
 How did the smug young curate rise to tune  
 Of '*Friend, a fatal fact divides us. Love*  
*Suits me no longer. I have suffered shame,*  
*Betrayal : past is past ; the future—yours—*  
*Shall never be contaminate by mine.*  
*I might have spared me this confession, not*  
*—Oh, never by some hideousest of lies,*  
*Easy, impenetrable ! No ! but say,*  
*By just the quiet answer—" I am cold."*  
*Falsehood avaint, each shadow of thee, hence !*  
*Had happier fortune willed . . . but dreams are vain.*  
*Now, leave me—yes, for pity's sake !' Aha,*  
 Who fails to see the curate as his face  
 Reddened and whitened, wanted handkerchief  
 At wrinkling brow and twinkling eye, until  
 Out burst the proper '*Angel, whom the fiend*  
*Has thought to smirch,—thy whiteness, at one wipe*  
*Of holy cambric, shall disgrace the swan !*  
*Mine be the task' . . . and so forth ! Fool ? not he !*

## THE INN ALBUM

Cunning in flavours, rather ! What but sour  
 Suspected makes the sweetness doubly sweet,  
 And what stings love from faint to flamboyant  
 But the fear-sprinkle ? Even horror helps—  
*'Love's flame in me by such recited wrong* 1520  
*Drenched, quenched, indeed ? It burns the fiercelier*  
*thence !'*

Why, I have known men never love their wives  
 Till somebody—myself, suppose—had *'drenched*  
*And quenched love,'* so the blockheads whined: as if  
 The fluid fire that lifts the torpid limb 1525  
 Were a wrong done to palsy. But I thrilled  
 No palsied person : half my age, or less,  
 The curate was, I 'll wager : o'er young blood  
 Your beauty triumphed ! Eh, but—was it *he* ?  
 Then, it *was* he, I heard of ! None beside ! 1530  
 How frank you were about the audacious boy  
 Who fell upon you like a thunderbolt—  
 Passion and protestation ! He it was  
 Reserved *in petto* ! Ay, and *'rich'* beside—  
*'Rich'*—how supremely did disdain curl nose ! 1535  
 All that I heard was—*'wedded to a priest ;'*  
 Informants sunk youth, riches and the rest.  
 And so my lawless love departed loves,  
 That loves might come together with a rush !  
 Surely this last achievement sucked me dry : 1540  
 Indeed, that way my wits went. Mistress-queen,  
 Be merciful and let your subject slink  
 Into dark safety ! He 's a beggar, see—  
 Do not turn back his ship, Australia-bound,  
 And bid her land him right amid some crowd 1545  
 Of creditors, assembled by your curse !  
 Don't cause the very rope to crack (you can !)  
 Whereon he spends his last (friend's) sixpence, just  
 The moment when he hoped to hang himself !  
 Be satisfied you beat him !"

## THE INN ALBUM

She replies—

1550

“Beat him! I do. To all that you confess  
Of abject failure, I extend belief.  
Your very face confirms it: God is just!  
Let my face—fix your eyes!—in turn confirm  
What I shall say. All-abject’s but half truth;  
Add to all-abject knave as perfect fool!  
So is it you probed human nature, so  
Prognosticated of me? Lay these words  
To heart then, or where God meant heart should  
lurk!

1555

That moment when you first revealed yourself,  
My simple impulse prompted—end forthwith  
The ruin of a life uprooted thus  
To surely perish! How should such spoiled tree  
Henceforward baulk the wind of its worst sport,  
Fail to go falling deeper, falling down  
From sin to sin until some depth were reached  
Doomed to the weakest by the wickedest  
Of weak and wicked human kind? But when,  
That self-display made absolute,—behold  
A new revealment!—round you pleased to veer,  
Propose me what should prompt annul the past,  
Make me ‘*amends by marriage*’—in your phrase,  
Incorporate me henceforth, body and soul,  
With soul and body which mere brushing past  
Brought leprosy upon me—‘*marry*’ these!  
Why, then despair broke, re-assurance dawned,  
Clear-sighted was I that who hurled contempt  
As I—thank God!—at the contemptible,  
Was scarce an utter weakling. Rent away  
By treason from my rightful pride of place,  
I was not destined to the shame below.  
A cleft had caught me: I might perish there,  
But thence to be dislodged and whirled at last

1560

1565

1570

1575

1580

## THE INN ALBUM

Where the black torrent sweeps the sewage—no !  
*'Bare breast be on hard rock,'* laughed out my soul 1585  
 In gratitude, *'howe'er rock's grip may grind !*  
*The plain rough wretched holdfast shall suffice*  
*This wreck of me !'* The wind,—I broke in bloom  
 At passage of,—which stripped me bole and branch,  
 Twisted me up and tossed me here,—turns back, 1590  
 And, playful ever, would replant the spoil ?  
 Be satisfied, not one least leaf that 's mine  
 Shall henceforth help wind's sport to exercise !  
 Rather I give such remnant to the rock  
 Which never dreamed a straw would settle there. 1595  
 Rock may not thank me, may not feel my breast,  
 Even : enough that *I* feel, hard and cold,  
 Its safety my salvation. Safe and saved,  
 I lived, live. When the tempter shall persuade  
 His prey to slip down, slide off, trust the wind,— 1600  
 Now that I know if God or Satan be  
 Prince of the Power of the Air,—then, then, indeed,  
 Let my life end and degradation too !"

"Good !" he smiles, "true Lord Byron ! *'Tree*  
*and rock :'*  
*'Rock'*—there 's advancement ! He 's at first a 1605  
 youth,  
 Rich, worthless therefore ; next he grows a priest :  
 Youth, riches prove a notable resource,  
 When to leave me for their possessor gluts  
 Malice abundantly ; and now, last change,  
 The young rich parson represents a rock 1610  
 —Bloodstone, no doubt. He 's Evangelical ?  
 Your Ritualists prefer the Church for spouse !"

She speaks.

"I have a story to relate.  
 There was a parish-priest, my father knew,

## THE INN ALBUM

Elderly, poor : I used to pity him 1615  
 Before I learned what woes are pity-worth.  
 Elderly was grown old now, scanty means  
 Were straitening fast to poverty, beside  
 The ailments which await in such a case.  
 Limited every way, a perfect man 1620  
 Within the bounds built up and up since birth  
 Breast-high about him till the outside world  
 Was blank save o'erhead one blue bit of sky—  
 Faith : he had faith in dogma, small or great,  
 As in the fact that if he clave his skull 1625  
 He 'd find a brain there : who proves such a fact  
 No falsehood by experiment at price  
 Of soul and body ? The one rule of life  
 Delivered him in childhood was '*Obey !*  
*Labour !*' He had obeyed and laboured—tame, 1630  
 True to the mill-track blinked on from above.  
 Some scholarship he may have gained in youth :  
 Gone—dropt or flung behind. Some blossom-flake,  
 Spring's boon, descends on every vernal head,  
 I used to think ; but January joins 1635  
 December, as his year had known no May  
 Trouble its snow-deposit,—cold and old !  
 I heard it was his will to take a wife,  
 A helpmate. Duty bade him tend and teach—  
 How ? with experience null, nor sympathy 1640  
 Abundant,—while himself worked dogma dead,  
 Who would play ministrant to sickness, age,  
 Womankind, childhood ? These demand a wife.  
 Supply the want, then ! theirs the wife ; for him—  
 No coarsest sample of the proper sex 1645  
 But would have served his purpose equally  
 With God's own angel,—let but knowledge match  
 Her coarseness : zeal does only half the work.  
 I saw this—knew the purblind honest drudge  
 Was wearing out his simple blameless life, 1650



## THE INN ALBUM

And wanted help beneath a burthen—borne  
To treasure-house or dust-heap, what cared I?  
Partner he needed: I proposed myself,  
Nor much surprised him—duty was so clear!  
Gratitude? What for? Gain of Paradise— 1655  
Escape, perhaps, from the dire penalty  
Of who hides talent in a napkin? No:  
His scruple was—should I be strong enough  
—In body? since of weakness in the mind,  
Weariness in the heart—no fear of these! 1660  
He took me as these Arctic voyagers  
Take an aspirant to their toil and pain:  
Can he endure them?—that's the point, and not  
—Will he? Who would not, rather! Where-  
upon,  
I pleaded far more earnestly for leave 1665  
To give myself away, than you to gain  
What you called priceless till you gained the heart  
And soul and body! which, as beggars serve  
Extorted alms, you straightway spat upon.  
Not so my husband,—for I gained my suit, 1670  
And had my value put at once to proof.  
Ask him! These four years I have died away  
In village-life. The village? Ugliness  
At best and filthiness at worst, inside.  
Outside, sterility—earth sown with salt 1675  
Or what keeps even grass from growing fresh.  
The life? I teach the poor and learn, myself,  
That commonplace to such stupidity  
Is all-recondite. Being brutalized  
Their true need is brute-language, cheery grunts 1680  
And kindly cluckings, no articulate  
Nonsense that's elsewhere knowledge. Tend the  
sick,  
Sickened myself at pig-perversity,  
Cat-craft dog-snarling,—may be, snapping . . .”

## THE INN ALBUM

“ Brief :

You eat that root of bitterness called Man 1685  
—Raw : I prefer it cooked, with social sauce !  
So, he was not the rich youth after all !  
Well, I mistook. But somewhere needs must be  
The compensation. If not young nor rich . . .”

“ You interrupt.”

“ Because you ’ve daubed enough 1690  
Bistre for background. Play the artist now,  
Produce your figure well-relieved in front !  
The contrast—do not I anticipate ?  
Though neither rich nor young—what then ?  
’T is all  
Forgotten, all this ignobility, 1695  
In the dear home, the darling word, the smile,  
The something sweeter . . .”

“ Yes, you interrupt.  
I have my purpose and proceed. Who lives  
With beasts assumes beast-nature, look and voice,  
And, much more, thought, for beasts think. Selfish-  
ness 1700  
In us met selfishness in them, deserved  
Such answer as it gained. My husband, bent  
On saving his own soul by saving theirs,—  
They, bent on being saved if saving soul  
Included body’s getting bread and cheese 1705  
Somehow in life and somehow after death,—  
Both parties were alike in the same boat,  
One danger, therefore one equality.  
Safety induces culture : culture seeks  
To institute, extend and multiply 1710  
The difference between safe man and man,  
Able to live alone now ; progress means

## THE INN ALBUM

What but abandonment of fellowship ?  
We were in common danger, still stuck close.  
No new books,—were the old ones mastered yet ? 1715  
No pictures and no music : these divert  
—What from? the staving danger off! You paint  
The waterspout above, you set to words  
The roaring of the tempest round you? Thanks!  
Amusement? Talk at end of the tired day 1720  
Of the more tiresome morrow! I transcribed  
The page on page of sermon-scrawlings—stopped  
Intellect's eye and ear to sense and sound—  
Vainly : the sound and sense would penetrate  
To brain and plague there in despite of me 1725  
Maddened to know more moral good were done  
Had we two simply sallied forth and preached  
I' the '*Green*' they call their grimy,—I with twang  
Of long-disused guitar,—with cut and slash  
Of much-misvalued horsewhip he,—to bid 1730  
The peaceable come dance, the peace-breaker  
Pay in his person! Whereas—Heaven and Hell,  
Excite with that, restrain with this! So dealt  
His drugs my husband; as he dosed himself,  
He drenched his cattle : and, for all my part 1735  
Was just to dub the mortar, never fear  
But drugs, hand pestled at, have poisoned nose!  
Heaven he let pass, left wisely undescribed :  
As applicable therefore to the sleep  
I want, that knows no waking—as to what 's 1740  
Conceived of as the proper prize to tempt  
Souls less world-weary : there, no fault to find!  
But Hell he made explicit. After death,  
Life : man created new, ingeniously  
Perfect for a vindictive purpose now 1745  
That man, first fashioned in beneficence,  
Was proved a failure ; intellect at length  
Replacing old obtuseness, memory

## THE INN ALBUM

Made mindful of delinquent's bygone deeds  
 Now that remorse was vain, which life-long lay 1750  
 Dormant when lesson might be laid to heart ;  
 New gift of observation up and down  
 And round man's self, new power to apprehend  
 Each necessary consequence of act  
 In man for well or ill—things obsolete— 1755  
 Just granted to supplant the idiocy  
 Man's only guide while act was yet to choose,  
 With ill or well momentarily its fruit ;  
 A faculty of immense suffering  
 Conferred on mind and body,—mind, erewhile 1760  
 Unvisited by one compunctious dream  
 During sin's drunken slumber, startled up,  
 Stung through and through by sin's significance  
 Now that the holy was abolished—just  
 As body which, alive, broke down beneath 1765  
 Knowledge, lay helpless in the path to good,  
 Failed to accomplish aught legitimate,  
 Achieve aught worthy,—which grew old in youth,  
 And at its longest fell a cut-down flower,—  
 Dying, this too revived by miracle 1770  
 To bear no end of burthen now that back  
 Supported torture to no use at all,  
 And live imperishably potent—since  
 Life's potency was impotent to ward  
 One plague off which made earth a hell before. 1775  
 This doctrine, which one healthy view of things,  
 One sane sight of the general ordinance—  
 Nature,—and its particular object,—man,—  
 Which one mere eye-cast at the character  
 Of Who made these and gave man sense to boot, 1780  
 Had dissipated once and evermore,—  
 This doctrine I have dosed our flock withal.  
 Why? Because none believed it. *They* desire  
 Such Heaven and dread such Hell, whom every day

## THE INN ALBUM

The alehouse tempts from one, a dog-fight bids 1785  
Defy the other? All the harm is done  
Ourselves—done my poor husband who in youth  
Perhaps read Dickens, done myself who still  
Could play both Bach and Brahms. Such life I  
lead—

Thanks to you, knave! You learn its quality— 1790  
Thanks to me, fool!"

He eyes her earnestly,  
But she continues.

“—Life which, thanks once more  
To you, arch-knave as exquisitest fool,  
I acquiescingly—I gratefully  
Take back again to heart! and hence this speech 1795  
Which yesterday had spared you. Four years long  
Life—I began to find intolerable,  
Only this moment. Ere your entry just,  
The leap of heart which answered, spite of me.  
A friend's first summons, first provocative, 1800  
Authoritative, nay, compulsive call  
To quit, though for a single day, my house  
Of bondage—made return seem horrible.  
I heard again a human lucid laugh  
All trust, no fear; again saw earth pursue 1805  
Its narrow busy way amid small cares,  
Smaller contentments, much weeds, some few  
flowers,—  
Never suspicious of a thunderbolt  
Avenging presently each daisy's death.  
I recognized the beech-tree, knew the thrush 1810  
Repeated his old music-phrase,—all right,  
How wrong was I, then! But your entry broke  
Illusion, bade me back to bounds at once.  
I honestly submit my soul: which sprang  
At love, and losing love lies signed and sealed 1815

## THE INN ALBUM

*'Failure.'* No love more? then, no beauty more  
 Which tends to breed love! Purify my powers,  
 Effortless till some other world procure  
 Some other chance of prize! or, if none be,—  
 Nor second world nor chance,—undesecrate 1820  
 Die then this aftergrowth of heart, surmised  
 Where May's precipitation left June blank!  
 Better have failed in the high aim, as I,  
 Than vulgarly in the low aim succeed  
 As, God be thanked, I do not! Ugliness 1825  
 Had I called beauty, falsehood—truth, and you  
 —My lover! No—this earth's unchanged for me,  
 By his enchantment whom God made the Prince  
 O' the Power o' the Air, into a Heaven: there is  
 Heaven, since there is Heaven's simulation—earth. 1830  
 I sit possessed in patience; prison-roof  
 Shall break one day and Heaven beam overhead."

His smile is done with; he speaks bitterly.

"Take my congratulations, and permit  
 I wish myself had proved as teachable! 1835  
 —Or, no! until you taught me, could I learn  
 A lesson from experience ne'er till now  
 Conceded? Please you listen while I show  
 How thoroughly you estimate my worth  
 And yours—the immeasurably superior! I 1840  
 Believed at least in one thing, first to last,—  
 Your love to me: I was the vile and you  
 The precious; I abused you, I betrayed,  
 But doubted—never! Why else go my way  
 Judas-like plodding to this Potter's Field 1845  
 Where fate now finds me? What has dinned my ear  
 And dogged my step? The spectre with the shriek  
*'Such she was, such were you, whose punishment*  
*Is just!'* And such she was not, all the while!  
 She never owned a love to outrage, faith 1850

## THE INN ALBUM

To pay with falsehood ! For, my heart knows this—  
Love once and you love always. Why, it 's down  
Here in the Album : every lover knows  
Love may use hate but—turn to hate, itself—  
Turn even to indifference—no, indeed ! 1855  
Well, I have been spell-bound, deluded like  
The witless negro by the Obeah-man  
Who bids him wither : so, his eye grows dim,  
His arm slack, arrow misses aim and spear  
Goes wandering wide,—and all the woe because 1860  
He proved untrue to Fetish, who, he finds,  
Was just a feather-phantom ! I wronged love,  
Am ruined,—and there was no love to wrong !”

“ No love ? Ah, dead love ! I invoke thy ghost  
To show the murderer where thy heart poured life 1865  
At summons of the stroke he doubts was dealt  
On pasteboard and pretence ! Not love, my love ?  
I changed for you the very laws of life :  
Made you the standard of all right, all fair.  
No genius but you could have been, no sage, 1870  
No sufferer—which is grandest—for the truth !  
My hero—where the heroic only hid  
To burst from hiding, brighten earth one day !  
Age and decline were man's maturity ;  
Face, form were nature's type : more grace, more  
strength, 1875  
What had they been but just superfluous gauds,  
Lawless divergence ? I have danced through day  
On tiptoe at the music of a word,  
Have wondered where was darkness gone as night  
Burst out in stars at brilliance of a smile ! 1880  
Lonely, I placed the chair to help me seat  
Your fancied presence ; in companionship,  
I kept my finger constant to your glove  
Glued to my breast ; then—where was all the world ?

## THE INN ALBUM

I schemed—not dreamed—how I might die some  
death 1885  
Should save your finger aching! Who creates  
Destroys, he only: I had laughed to scorn  
Whatever angel tried to shake my faith  
And make you seem unworthy: you yourself  
Only could do that! With a touch 't was done. 1890  
*'Give me all, trust me wholly!'* At the word,  
I did give, I did trust—and thereupon  
The touch did follow. Ah, the quiet smile,  
The masterfully-folded arm in arm,  
As trick obtained its triumph one time more! 1895  
In turn, my soul too triumphs in defeat:  
Treason like faith moves mountains: love is gone!"

He paces to and fro, stops, stands quite close  
And calls her by her name. Then—

“God forgives:  
Forgive you, delegate of God, brought near 1900  
As never priests could bring him to this soul  
That prays you both—forgive me! I abase—  
Know myself mad and monstrous utterly  
In all I did that moment; but as God  
Gives me this knowledge—heart to feel and tongue 1905  
To testify—so be you gracious too!  
Judge no man by the solitary work  
Of—well, they do say and I can believe—  
The devil in him: his, the moment,—mine  
The life—your life!”

He names her name again. 1910

“You were just—merciful as just, you were  
In giving me no respite: punishment  
Followed offending. Sane and sound once more,



## THE INN ALBUM

The patient thanks decision, promptitude,  
Which flung him prone and fastened him from hurt, 1915  
Haply to others, surely to himself.  
I wake and would not you had spared one pang.  
All 's well that ends well ! ”

Yet again her name.

“ Had *you* no fault ? Why must you change, for-  
sooth,  
Parts, why reverse positions, spoil the play ? 1920  
Why did your nobleness look up to me,  
Not down on the ignoble thing confessed ?  
Was it your part to stoop, or lift the low ?  
Wherefore did God exalt you ? Who would teach  
The brute man's tameness and intelligence 1925  
Must never drop the dominating eye :  
Wink—and what wonder if the mad fit break,  
Followed by stripes and fasting ? Sound and sane,  
My life, chastised now, couches at your foot.  
Accept, redeem me ! Do your eyes ask ‘ *How ?* ’ 1930  
I stand here penniless, a beggar ; talk  
What idle trash I may, this final blow  
Of fortune fells me. *I* disburse, indeed,  
This boy his winnings ? when each bubble-scheme  
That danced athwart my brain, a minute since, 1935  
The worse the better,—of repairing straight  
My misadventure by fresh enterprise,  
Capture of other boys in foolishness  
His fellows,—when these fancies fade away  
At first sight of the lost so long, the found 1940  
So late, the lady of my life, before  
Whose presence I, the lost, am also found  
Incapable of one least touch of mean  
Expedient, I who teemed with plot and wile—  
That family of snakes your eye bids flee ! 1945

## THE INN ALBUM

Listen ! Our troublesomest dreams die off  
In daylight : I awake, and dream is—where ?  
I rouse up from the past : one touch dispels  
England and all here. I secured long since  
A certain refuge, solitary home 1950  
To hide in, should the head strike work one day,  
The hand forget its cunning, or perhaps  
Society grow savage,—there to end  
My life's remainder, which, say what fools will,  
Is or should be the best of life,—its fruit, 1955  
All tends to, root and stem and leaf and flower.  
Come with me, love, loved once, loved only, come,  
Blend loves there ! Let this parenthetic doubt  
Of love, in me, have been the trial-test  
Appointed to all flesh at some one stage 1960  
Of soul's achievement,—when the strong man  
doubts  
His strength, the good man whether goodness be,  
The artist in the dark seeks, fails to find  
Vocation, and the saint forswears his shrine.  
What if the lover may elude, no more 1965  
Than these, probative dark, must search the sky  
Vainly for love, his soul's star ? But the orb  
Breaks from eclipse : I breathe again : I love !  
Tempted, I fell ; but fallen—fallen lie  
Here at your feet, see ! Leave this poor pretence 1970  
Of union with a nature and its needs  
Repugnant to your needs and nature ! Nay,  
False, beyond falsity you reprehend  
In me, is such mock marriage with such mere  
Man-mask as—whom you witless wrong, beside, 1975  
By that expenditure of heart and brain  
He recks no more of than would yonder tree  
If watered with your life-blood : rains and dews  
Answer its ends sufficiently, while me  
One drop saves—sends to flower and fruit at last 1980

## THE INN ALBUM

The laggard virtue in the soul which else  
Cumbers the ground! Quicken me! Call me  
yours—

Yours and the world's—yours and the world's and  
God's!

Yes, for you can, you only! Think! Confirm  
Your instinct! Say, a minute since, I seemed 1985

The castaway you count me,—all the more

Apparent shall the angelic potency

Lift me from out perdition's deep of deeps

To light and life and love!—that's love for you—

Love that already dares match might with yours. 1990

You loved one worthy,—in your estimate,—

When time was; you descried the unworthy taint,

And where was love then? No such test could e'er

Try my love: but you hate me and revile;

Hatred, revilement—had you these to bear 1995

Would you, as I do, nor revile, nor hate,

But simply love on, love the more, perchance?

Abide by your own proof! '*Your love was love:*

*Its ghost knows no forgetting!*' Heart of mine,

Would that I dared remember! Too unwise 2000

Were he who lost a treasure, did himself

Enlarge upon the sparkling catalogue

Of gems to her his queen who trusted late

The keeper of her caskets! Can it be

That I, custodian of such relic still 2005

As your contempt permits me to retain,

All I dare hug to breast is—'*How your glove*

*Burst and displayed the long thin lily-streak!*'

What may have followed—that is forfeit now!

I hope the proud man has grown humble. True— 2010

One grace of humbleness absents itself—

Silence! yet love lies deeper than all words,

And not the spoken but the speechless love

Waits answer ere I rise and go my way."

## THE INN ALBUM

Whereupon, yet one other time the name.

2015

To end she looks the large deliberate look,  
Even prolongs it somewhat ; then the soul  
Bursts forth in a clear laugh that lengthens on,  
On, till—thinned, softened, silvered, one might say  
The bitter runnel hides itself in sand,  
Moistens the hard grey grimly comic speech.

2020

“ Ay—give the baffled angler even yet  
His supreme triumph as he hales to shore  
A second time the fish once 'scaped from hook :  
So artfully has new bait hidden old  
Blood-imbrued iron ! Ay, no barb 's beneath  
The gilded minnow here ! You bid break trust,  
This time, with who trusts me,—not simply bid  
Me trust you, me who ruined but myself,  
In trusting but myself ! Since, thanks to you,  
I know the feel of sin and shame,—be sure,  
I shall obey you and impose them both  
On one who happens to be ignorant  
Although my husband—for the lure is love,  
Your love ! Try other tackle, fisher-friend !  
Repentance, expiation, hopes and fears,  
What you had been, may yet be, would I but  
Prove helpmate to my hero—one and all  
These silks and worsteds round the hook seduce  
Hardly the late torn throat and mangled tongue.  
Pack up, I pray, the whole assortment prompt !  
Who wonders at variety of wile  
In the Arch-cheat ? You are the Adversary !  
Your fate is of your choosing : have your choice !  
Wander the world,—God has some end to serve  
Ere he suppress you ! He waits : I endure,  
But interpose no finger-tip, forsooth,  
To stop your passage to the pit. Enough

2025

2030

2035

2040

2045

## THE INN ALBUM

That I am stable, uninvolved by you  
In the rush downwards : free I gaze and fixed ; 2050  
Your smiles, your tears, prayers, curses move alike  
My crowned contempt. You kneel ? Prostrate  
yourself !  
To earth, and would the whole world saw you  
there ! ”

Whereupon—“ All right ! ” carelessly begins  
Somebody from outside, who mounts the stair, 2055  
And sends his voice for herald of approach :  
Half in half out the doorway as the door  
Gives way to push.

“ Old fellow, all ’s no good !  
The train ’s your portion ! Lay the blame on me !  
I ’m no diplomatist, and Bismarck’s self 2060  
Had hardly braved the awful Aunt at broach  
Of proposition—so has world-repute  
Preceded the illustrious stranger ! Ah !—”

Quick the voice changes to astonishment,  
Then horror, as the youth stops, sees, and knows. 2065

The man who knelt starts up from kneeling, stands  
Moving no muscle, and confronts the stare.

One great red outbreak buries—throat and brow—  
The lady’s proud pale queenliness of scorn :  
Then her great eyes that turned so quick, become 2070  
Intenser : quail at gaze, not they indeed !

# THE INN ALBUM

## V

It is the young man shatters silence first.

“ Well, my lord—for indeed my lord you are,  
I little guessed how rightly—this last proof  
Of lordship-paramount confounds too much 2075  
My simple head-piece ! Let 's see how we stand  
Each to the other ! how we stood i' the game  
Of life an hour ago,—the magpies, stile  
And oak-tree witnessed. Truth exchanged for  
truth—

My lord confessed his four-years-old affair— 2080  
How he seduced and then forsook the girl  
Who married somebody and left him sad.

My pitiful experience was—I loved  
A girl whose gown's hem had I dared to touch  
My finger would have failed me, palsy-fixed. 2085  
She left me, sad enough, to marry—whom ?

A better man,—then possibly not you !  
How does the game stand ? Who is who and what  
Is what, o' the board now, since an hour went by ?  
My lord's '*seduced, forsaken, sacrificed,*' 2090

Starts up, my lord's familiar instrument,  
Associate and accomplice, mistress-slave—  
Shares his adventure, follows on the sly !  
—Ay, and since 'bag and baggage' is a phrase—  
Baggage lay hid in carpet-bag belike, 2095

Was but unpadlocked when occasion came  
For holding council, since my back was turned,  
On how invent ten thousand pounds which, paid,  
Would lure the winner to lose twenty more,  
Beside refunding these ! Why else allow 2100  
The fool to gain them ? So displays herself  
The lady whom my heart believed—oh, laugh !

## THE INN ALBUM

Noble and pure : whom my heart loved at once,  
And who at once did speak truth when she said  
*'I am not mine now but another's'*—thus 2105  
Being that other's ! Devil's-marriage, eh ?  
*'My lie weds thine till lucre us do part ?'*  
But pity me the snobbish simpleton,  
You two aristocratic tip-top swells  
At swindling ! Quits, I cry ! Decamp content 2110  
With skin I'm peeled of : do not strip bones  
bare—  
As that you could, I have no doubt at all !  
O you two rare ones ! Male and female, Sir !  
The male there smirked, this morning, *'Come, my  
boy—*  
*Out with it ! You've been crossed in love, I think :* 2115  
*I recognize the lover's hangdog look ;*  
*Make a clean breast and match my confidence,*  
*For, I'll be frank, I too have had my fling,*  
*Am punished for my fault, and smart enough !*  
*Where now the victim hides her head, God knows !'* 2120  
Here loomed her head life-large, the devil knew !  
Look out, Salvini ! Here's your man, your match !  
He and I sat applauding, stall by stall,  
Last Monday—*'Here's Othello'* was our word,  
*'But where's Iago ?'* Where ? Why, there ! And  
now 2125  
The fellow-artist, female specimen—  
Oh, lady, you must needs describe yourself !  
He's great in art, but you—how greater still  
—(If I can rightly, out of all I learned,  
Apply one bit of Latin that assures 2130  
*'Art means just art's concealment'*)—tower yourself !  
For he stands plainly visible henceforth—  
Liar and scamp : while you, in artistry  
Prove so consummate—or I prove perhaps  
So absolute an ass—that—either way— 2135

## THE INN ALBUM

You still do seem to me who worshipped you  
And see you take the homage of this man  
Your master, who played slave and knelt, no doubt,  
Before a mistress in his very craft . . .  
Well, take the fact, I nor believe my eyes, 2140  
Nor trust my understanding ! Still you seem  
Noble and pure as when we had the talk  
Under the tower, beneath the trees, that day.  
And there 's the key explains the secret : down  
He knelt to ask your leave to rise a grade 2145  
I' the mystery of humbug : well he may !  
For how you beat him ! Half an hour ago,  
I held your master for my best of friends ;  
And now I hate him ! Four years since, you  
seemed  
My heart's one love : well, and you so remain ! 2150  
What 's he to you in craft ? ”

She looks him through.

“My friend, 't is just that friendship have its  
turn—  
Interrogate thus me whom one, of foes  
The worst, has questioned and is answered by.  
Take you as frank an answer ! answers both 2155  
Begin alike so far, divergent soon  
World-wide—I own superiority  
Over you, over him. As him I searched,  
So do you stand seen through and through by me  
Who, this time, proud, report your crystal shrines 2160  
A dewdrop, plain as amber prisons round  
A spider in the hollow heart his house !  
Nowise are you that thing my fancy feared  
When out you stepped on me, a minute since,  
—This man's confederate ! no, you step not thus 2165  
Obsequiously at beck and call to help



## THE INN ALBUM

At need some second scheme, and supplement  
Guile by force, use my shame to pinion me  
From struggle and escape ! I fancied that !  
Forgive me ! Only by strange chance,—most  
strange 2170  
In even this strange world,—you enter now,  
Obtain your knowledge. Me you havenot wronged  
Who never wronged you—least of all, my friend,  
That day beneath the College tower and trees,  
When I refused to say,—‘*not friend but, love !*’ 2175  
Had I been found as free as air when first  
We met, I scarcely could have loved you. No—  
For where was that in you which claimed return  
Of love ? My eyes were all too weak to probe  
This other’s seeming, but that seeming loved 2180  
The soul in me, and lied—I know too late !  
While your truth was truth : and I knew at once  
My power was just my beauty—bear the word—  
As I must bear, of all my qualities,  
To name the poorest one that serves my soul 2185  
And simulates myself ! So much in me  
You loved, I know : the something that’s beneath  
Heard not your call,—uncalled, no answer comes !  
For, since in every love, or soon or late  
Soul must awake and seek out soul for soul, 2190  
Yours, overlooking mine then, would, some day,  
Take flight to find some other ; so it proved—  
Missing me, you were ready for this man.  
I apprehend the whole relation : his—  
The soul wherein you saw your type of worth 2195  
At once, true object of your tribute. Well  
Might I refuse such half-heart’s homage ! Love  
Divining, had assured you I no more  
Stand his participant in infamy  
Than you—I need no love to recognize 2200  
As simply dupe and nowise fellow-cheat !

## THE INN ALBUM

Therefore accept one last friend's-word,—your  
friend's,

All men's friend, save a felon's. Ravel out  
The bad embroilment howsoe'er you may,  
Distribute as it please you praise or blame 2205  
To me—so you but fling this mockery far—  
Renounce this rag-and-feather hero-sham,  
This poodle clipt to pattern, lion-like !

Throw him his thousands back, and lay to heart  
The lesson I was sent,—if man discerned 2210  
Ever God's message,—just to teach. I judge—  
To far another issue than could dream

Your cousin,—younger, fairer, as befits—  
Who summoned me to judgment's exercise.  
I find you, save in folly, innocent. 2215

And in my verdict lies your fate ; at choice  
Of mine your cousin takes or leaves you. '*Take!*'  
I bid her—for you tremble back to truth.

She turns the scale,—one touch of the pure hand  
Shall so press down, emprison past relapse 2220  
Farther vibration 'twixt veracity—

That 's honest solid earth—and falsehood, theft  
And air, that 's one illusive emptiness !

That reptile capture you ? I conquered him :  
You saw him cower before me. Have no fear 2225

He shall offend you farther ! Spare to spurn—  
Safe let him slink hence till some subtler Eve  
Than I, anticipate the snake—bruise head  
Ere he bruise heel—or, warier than the first,  
Some Adam purge earth's garden of its pest 2230  
Before the slaver spoil the Tree of Life !

“You ! Leave this youth, as he leaves you, as I  
Leave each ! There 's caution surely extant yet  
Though conscience in you were too vain a claim.  
Hence quickly ! Keep the cash but leave unsoiled 2235

## THE INN ALBUM

The heart I rescue and would lay to heal  
Beside another's ! Never let her know  
How near came taint of your companionship ! ”

“ Ah ” — draws a long breath with a new strange look  
The man she interpellates — soul a-stir 2240  
Under its covert, as, beneath the dust,  
A coppery sparkle all at once denotes  
The hid snake has conceived a purpose.

“ Ah —  
Innocence should be crowned with ignorance ?  
Desirable indeed, but difficult ! 2245  
As if yourself, now, had not glorified  
Your helpmate by imparting him a hint  
Of how a monster made the victim bleed  
Ere crook and courage saved her — hint, I say, —  
Not the whole horror, — that were needless risk, — 2250  
But just such inkling, fancy of the fact,  
As should suffice to qualify henceforth  
The shepherd, when another lamb would stray,  
For warning ‘ *Ware the wolf !* ’ No doubt at all,  
Silence is generosity, — keeps wolf 2255  
Unhunted by flock’s warder ! Excellent,  
Did — generous to me, mean — just to him !  
But, screening the deceiver, lamb were found  
Outraging the deceitless ! So, — he knows !  
And yet, unharmed I breathe — perchance, repent — 2260  
Thanks to the mercifully-politic ! ”

“ Ignorance is not innocence but sin —  
Witness yourself ignore what after-pangs  
Pursue the plague-infected. Merciful  
Am I ? Perhaps ! The more contempt, the less 2265  
Hatred ; and who so worthy of contempt  
As you that rest assured I cooled the spot

## THE INN ALBUM

I could not cure, by poisoning, forsooth,  
Whose hand I pressed there ? Understand for once  
That, sick, of all the pains corroding me 2270  
This burnt the last and nowise least—the need  
Of simulating soundness. I resolved—  
No matter how the struggle tasked weak flesh—  
To hide the truth away as in a grave  
From—most of all—my husband : he nor knows 2275  
Nor ever shall be made to know your part,  
My part, the devil's part,—I trust, God's part  
In the foul matter. Saved, I yearn to save  
And not destroy : and what destruction like  
The abolishing of faith in him, that 's faith 2280  
In me as pure and true ? Acquaint some child  
Who takes yon tree into his confidence,  
That, where he sleeps now, was a murder done,  
And that the grass which grows so thick, he thinks,  
Only to pillow him is product just 2285  
Of what lies festering beneath ! 'T is God  
Must bear such secrets and disclose them. Man ?  
The miserable thing I have become  
By dread acquaintance with my secret—*you*—  
That thing had he become by learning *me*— 2290  
The miserable, whom his ignorance  
Would wrongly call the wicked : ignorance  
Being, I hold, sin ever, small or great.  
No, he knows nothing ! ”

“ He and I alike  
Are bound to you for such discreetness, then. 2295  
What if our talk should terminate awhile ?  
Here is a gentleman to satisfy,  
Settle accounts with, pay ten thousand pounds  
Before we part—as, by his face, I fear,  
Results from your appearance on the scene. 2300  
Grant me a minute's parley with my friend

## THE INN ALBUM

Which scarce admits of a third personage !  
The room from which you made your entry first  
So opportunely—still untenanted—  
What if you please return there ? Just a word 2305  
To my young friend first—then, a word to you,  
And you depart to fan away each fly  
From who, grass-pillowed, sleeps so sound at  
home ! ”

“ So the old truth comes back ! A wholesome  
change,—  
At last the altered eye, the rightful tone ! 2310  
But even to the truth that drops disguise  
And stands forth grinning malice which but now  
Whined so contritely—I refuse assent  
Just as to malice. I, once gone, come back ?  
No, my lord ! I enjoy the privilege 2315  
Of being absolutely loosed from you  
Too much—the knowledge that your power is null  
Which was omnipotence. A word of mouth,  
A wink of eye would have detained me once,  
Body and soul your slave ; and now, thank God, 2320  
Your fawningest of prayers, your frightfulest  
Of curses—neither would avail to turn  
My footstep for a moment ! ”

“ Prayer, then, tries  
No such adventure. Let us cast about  
For something novel in expedient : take 2325  
Command,—what say you ? I profess myself  
One fertile in resource. Commanding, then,  
I bid—not only wait there, but return  
Here, where I want you ! Disobey and—good !  
On your own head the peril ! ”

“ Come ! ” breaks in 2330  
The boy with his good glowing face. “ Shut up !

## THE INN ALBUM

None of this sort of thing while I stand here  
 —Not to stand that ! No bullying, I beg !  
 I also am to leave you presently  
 And never more set eyes upon your face— 2335  
 You won't mind that much ; but—I tell you frank—  
 I do mind having to remember this  
 For your last word and deed—my friend who were !  
 Bully a woman you have ruined, eh ?  
 Do you know,—I give credit all at once 2340  
 To all those stories everybody told  
 And nobody but I would disbelieve :  
 They all seem likely now,—nay, certain, sure !  
 I dare say you did cheat at cards that night  
 The row was at the Club : '*sauter la coupe*'— 2345  
 That was your 'cut,' for which your friends 'cut' you ;  
 While I, the booby, 'cut'—acquaintanceship  
 With who so much as laughed when I said '*luck!*'  
 I dare say you had bets against the horse  
 They doctored at the Derby ; little doubt, 2350  
 That fellow with the sister found you shirk  
 His challenge and did kick you like a ball,  
 Just as the story went about ! Enough :  
 It only serves to show how well advised,  
 Madam, you were in bidding such a fool 2355  
 As I, go hang. You see how the mere sight  
 And sound of you suffice to tumble down  
 Conviction topsy-turvy : no,—that 's false,—  
 There 's no unknowing what one knows ; and yet  
 Such is my folly that, in gratitude 2360  
 For . . . well, I 'm stupid ; but you seemed to wish  
 I should know gently what I know, should slip  
 Softly from old to new, not break my neck  
 Between beliefs of what you were and are.  
 Well then, for just the sake of such a wish 2365  
 To cut no worse a figure than needs must  
 In even eyes like mine, I 'd sacrifice

## THE INN ALBUM

Body and soul! But don't think danger—pray!—  
Menaces either! He do harm to us?  
Let me say 'us' this one time! You'd allow 2370  
I lent perhaps my hand to rid your ear  
Of some cur's yelping—hand that's fortified,  
Into the bargain, with a horsewhip? Oh,  
One crack and you shall see how curs decamp!  
My lord, you know your losses and my gains. 2375  
Pay me my money at the proper time!  
If cash be not forthcoming,—well, yourself  
Have taught me, and tried often, I'll engage,  
The proper course: I post you at the Club,  
Pillory the defaulter. Crack, to-day, 2380  
Shall, slash, to-morrow, slice through flesh and bone!  
There, Madam, you need mind no cur, I think!"

"Ah, what a gain to have an apt no less  
Than grateful scholar! Nay, he brings to mind  
My knowledge till he puts me to the blush, 2385  
So long has it lain rusty! Post my name!  
That were indeed a wheel from whipcord! Whew!  
I wonder now if I could rummage out  
—Just to match weapons—some old scorpion-  
scourge!  
Madam, you hear my pupil, may applaud 2390  
His triumph o'er the master. I—no more  
Bully, since I'm forbidden: but entreat—  
Wait and return—for my sake, no! but just  
To save your own defender, should he chance  
Get thwacked thro' awkward flourish of his thong. 2395  
And what if—since all waiting's weary work—  
I help the time pass 'twixt your exit now  
And entry then? for—pastime proper—here's  
The very thing, the Album, verse and prose  
To make the laughing minutes launch away! 2400  
Each of us must contribute. I'll begin—

## THE INN ALBUM

*'Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot !'*  
I 'm confident I beat the bard,—for why ?  
My young friend owns me an Iago—him  
Confessed, among the other qualities, 2405  
A ready rhymers. Oh, he rhymed ! Here goes !  
—Something to end with '*horsewhip !*' No, that  
rhyme  
Beats me ; there 's '*cowslip*,' '*boltsprit*,' nothing else !  
So, Tennyson take my benison,—verse for bard,  
Prose suits the gambler's book best ! Dared and  
done !" 2410

Wherewith he dips pen, writes a line or two,  
Closes and clasps the cover, gives the book,  
Bowing the while, to her who hesitates,  
Turns half away, turns round again, at last  
Takes it as you touch carrion, then retires. 2415  
The door shuts fast the couple.

### VI

With a change  
Of his whole manner, opens out at once  
The Adversary.

"Now, my friend, for you !  
You who, protected late, aggressive grown,  
Brandish, it seems, a weapon I must 'ware ! 2420  
Plain speech in me becomes respectable  
Henceforth, because courageous ; plainly, then—  
(Have lash well loose, hold handle tight and light !)  
Throughout my life's experience, you indulged  
Yourself and friend by passing in review 2425  
So courteously but now, I vainly search  
To find one record of a specimen  
So perfect of the pure and simple fool  
As this you furnish me. Ingratitude



## THE INN ALBUM

I lump with folly,—all 's one lot,—so—fool ! 2430  
 Did I seek you or you seek me ? Seek ? sneak  
 For service to, and service you would style—  
 And did style—godlike, scarce an hour ago !  
 Fool, there again, yet not precisely there  
 First-rate in folly : since the hand you kissed 2435  
 Did pick you from the kennel, did plant firm  
 Your footstep on the pathway, did persuade  
 Your awkward shamble to true gait and pace,  
 Fit for the world you walk in. Once a-strut  
 On that firm pavement which your cowardice 2440  
 Was for renouncing as a pitfall, next  
 Came need to clear your brains of their conceit  
 They cleverly could distinguish who was who,  
 Whatever folk might tramp the thoroughfare.  
 Men, now—familiarily you read them off, 2445  
 Each phyz at first sight ! O you had an eye !  
 Who couched it ? made you disappoint each fox  
 Eager to strip my gosling of his fluff  
 So golden as he cackled ' Goose trusts lamb ? '  
 ' *Ay, but I saved you—wolf defeated fox—* 2450  
*Wanting to pick your bones myself !* ' then, wolf  
 Has got the worst of it with goose for once.  
 I, penniless, pay you ten thousand pounds  
 (—No gesture, pray ! I pay ere I depart.)  
 And how you turn advantage to account 2455  
 Here 's the example. Have I proved so wrong  
 In my peremptory '*debt must be discharged ?*'  
 O you laughed lovelily, were loth to leave  
 The old friend out at elbows—pooh, a thing  
 Not to be thought of ! I must keep my cash, 2460  
 And you forget your generosity !  
 Ha ha, I took your measure when I laughed  
 My laugh to that ! First quarrel—nay, first faint  
 Pretence at taking umbrage—'*Down with debt,*  
*Both interest and principal !—The Club,* 2465

## THE INN ALBUM

*Exposure and expulsion!—stamp me out!*

That 's the magnanimous magnificent  
 Renunciation of advantage! Well,  
 But whence and why did you take umbrage, Sir?  
 Because your master, having made you know 2470  
 Somewhat of men, was minded to advance,  
 Expound you women, still a mystery!  
 My pupil potted with a cloud on brow,  
 A clod in breast: had loved, and vainly loved:  
 Whence blight and blackness, just for all the world 2475  
 As Byron used to teach us boys. Thought I—  
*'Quick rid him of that rubbish! Clear the cloud,  
 And set the heart a-pulsing!'*—heart, this time:  
 'T was nothing but the head I doctored late  
 For ignorance of Man; now heart 's to dose, 2480  
 Palsied by over-palpitation due  
 To Woman-worship—so, to work at once  
 On first avowal of the patient's ache!  
 This morning you described your malady,—  
 How you dared love a piece of virtue—lost 2485  
 To reason, as the upshot showed: for scorn  
 Fitly repaid your stupid arrogance;  
 And, parting, you went two ways, she resumed  
 Her path—perfection, while forlorn you paced  
 The world that 's made for beasts like you and me. 2490  
 My remedy was—tell the fool the truth!  
 Your paragon of purity had plumped  
 Into these arms at their first outspread—*'fallen  
 My victim,'* she prefers to turn the phrase—  
 And, in exchange for that frank confidence, 2495  
 Asked for my whole life present and to come—  
 Marriage: a thing uncovenanted for,  
 Never so much as put in question. Life—  
 Implied by marriage—throw that trifle in  
 And round the bargain off, no otherwise 2500  
 Than if, when we played cards, because you won

## THE INN ALBUM

My money you should also want my head !  
 That, I demurred to : we but played '*for love*'—  
 She won my love ; had she proposed for stakes  
 '*Marriage*,'—why, that 's for whist, a wiser game. 2505  
 Whereat she raved at me, as losers will,  
 And went her way. So far the story 's known,  
 The remedy 's applied, no farther : which  
 Here 's the sick man's first *honorarium* for—  
 Posting his medicine-monger at the Club ! 2510  
 That being, Sir, the whole you mean my fee—  
 In gratitude for such munificence  
 I 'm bound in common honesty to spare  
 No droplet of the draught : so,—pinch your nose,  
 Pull no wry faces !—drain it to the dregs ! 2515  
 I say '*She went off*'—'*went off*,' you subjoin,  
 '*Since not to wedded bliss, as I supposed,*  
*Sure to some convent : solitude and peace*  
*Help her to hide the shame from mortal view,*  
*With prayer and fasting.*' No, my sapient Sir ! 2520  
 Far wiselier, straightway she betook herself  
 To a prize-portent from the donkey-show  
 Of leathern long-ears that compete for palm  
 In clerical absurdity : since he,  
 Good ass, nor practises the shaving-trick, 2525  
 The candle-crotchet, nonsense which repays  
 When you 've young ladies congregant,—but  
     schools  
 The poor,—toils, moils and grinds the mill nor  
     means  
 To stop and munch one thistle in this life  
 Till next life smother him with roses : just 2530  
 The parson for her purpose ! Him she stroked  
 Over the muzzle ; into mouth with bit,  
 And on to back with saddle,—there he stood,  
 The serviceable beast who heard, believed  
 And meekly bowed him to the burden,—borne 2535

## THE INN ALBUM

Off in a canter to seclusion—ay,  
 The lady's lost! But had a friend of mine  
 —While friend he was—imparted his sad case  
 To sympathizing counsellor, full soon  
 One cloud at least had vanished from his brow. 2540  
 'Don't fear!' had followed reassuringly—  
 'The lost will in due time turn up again,  
 Probably just when, weary of the world,  
 You think of nothing less than settling-down  
 To country life and golden days, beside 2545  
 A dearest best and brightest virtuouslest  
 Wife: who needs no more hope to hold her own  
 Against the naughty-and-repentant—no,  
 Than water-gruel against Roman punch!'

And as I prophesied, it proves! My youth,— 2550  
 Just at the happy moment when, subdued  
 To spooniness, he finds that youth fleets fast,  
 Thattown-lifetires, that men should drop boys'-play,  
 That property, position have, no doubt,  
 Their exigency with their privilege, 2555  
 And if the wealthy wed with wealth, how dire  
 The double duty!—in, behold, there beams  
 Our long-lost lady, form and face complete!  
 And where's my moralizing pupil now,  
 Had not his master missed a train by chance? 2560  
 But, by your side instead of whirled away,  
 How have I spoiled scene, stopped catastrophe,  
 Struck flat the stage-effect I know by heart!  
 Sudden and strange the meeting—improvised?  
 Bless you, the last event she hoped or dreamed! 2565  
 But rude sharp stroke will crush out fire from flint—  
 Assuredly from flesh. 'T is you?' 'Myself.'  
 'Changed?' 'Changeless.' 'Then, what's earth to  
 me?' 'To me  
 What's heaven?' 'So,—thine!' 'And thine!' 'And  
 likewise mine!'

## THE INN ALBUM

Had laughed '*Amen*' the devil, but for me 2570  
 Whose intermeddling hinders this hot haste,  
 And bids you, ere concluding contract, pause—  
 Ponder one lesson more, then sign and seal  
 At leisure and at pleasure,—lesson's price  
 Being, if you have skill to estimate, 2575  
 —How say you?—I'm discharged my debt in full!  
 Since paid you stand, to farthing uttermost,  
 Unless I fare like that black majesty  
 A friend of mine had visit from last Spring.  
 Coasting along the Cape-side, he 's becalmed 2580  
 Off an uncharted bay, a novel town  
 Untouched at by the trader : here 's a chance !  
 Out paddles straight the king in his canoe,  
 Comes over bulwark, says he means to buy  
 Ship's cargo—being rich and having brought 2585  
 A treasure ample for the purpose. See !  
 Four dragons, stalwart blackies, guard the same  
 Wrapped round and round: its hulls, a multitude,—  
 Palm-leaf and cocoa-mat and goat's-hair cloth  
 All duly braced about with bark and board,— 2590  
 Suggest how brave, 'neath coat, must kernel be !  
 At length the peeling is accomplished, plain  
 The casket opens out its core, and lo  
 —A brand-new British silver sixpence—bid  
 That 's ample for the Bank,—thinks majesty ! 2595  
 You are the Captain ; call my sixpence cracked  
 Or copper ; '*what I 've said is calumny ;*  
*The lady's spotless !*' Then, I 'll prove my words,  
 Or make you prove them true as truth—yourself,  
 Here, on the instant ! I 'll not mince my speech, 2600  
 Things at this issue. When she enters, then,  
 Make love to her ! No talk of marriage now—  
 The point-blank bare proposal ! Pick no phrase—  
 Prevent all misconception ! Soon you 'll see  
 How different the tactics when she deals 2605

## THE INN ALBUM

With an instructed man, no longer boy  
Who blushes like a booby. Woman's wit !  
Man, since you have instruction, blush no more !  
Such your five minutes' profit by my pains,  
'T is simply now—demand and be possessed ! 2610  
Which means—you may possess—may strip the tree  
Of fruit desirable to make one wise.  
More I nor wish nor want : your act 's your act,  
My teaching is but—there 's the fruit to pluck  
Or let alone at pleasure. Next advance 2615  
In knowledge were beyond you ! Don't expect  
I bid a novice—pluck, suck, send sky-high  
Such fruit, once taught that neither crab nor sloe  
Falls readier prey to who but robs a hedge,  
Than this gold apple to my Hercules. 2620  
Were you no novice but proficient—then,  
Then, truly, I might prompt you—Touch and taste,  
Try flavour and be tired as soon as I !  
Toss on the prize to greedy mouths agape,  
Betake yours, sobered as the satiate grow, 2625  
To wise man's solid meal of house and land,  
Consols and cousin ! but my boy, my boy,  
Such lore 's above you !

Here 's the lady back !

So, Madam, you have conned the Album-page  
And come to thank its last contributor ? 2630  
How kind and condescending ! I retire  
A moment, lest I spoil the interview,  
And mar my own endeavour to make friends—  
You with him, him with you, and both with me !  
If I succeed—permit me to inquire 2635  
Five minutes hence ! Friends bid good-bye, you  
know.'  
And out he goes.

# THE INN ALBUM

## VII

She, face, form, bearing, one  
Superb composure—

“ He has told you all ?

Yes, he has told you all, your silence says—  
What gives him, as he thinks the mastery 2640  
Over my body and my soul !—has told  
That instance, even, of their servitude  
He now exacts of me ? A silent blush !  
That 's well, though better would white ignorance  
Beseem your brow, undesecrate before— 2645  
Ay, when I left you ! I too learn at last  
—Hideously learned as I seemed so late—  
What sin may swell to. Yes,—I needed learn  
That, when my prophet's rod became the snake  
I fled from, it would, one day, swallow up 2650  
—Incorporate whatever serpentine  
Falsehood and treason and unmanliness  
Beslime earth's pavement: such the power of Hell,  
And so beginning, ends no otherwise  
The Adversary ! I was ignorant, 2655  
Blameworthy—if you will ; but blame I take  
Nowise upon me as I ask myself  
—*You*—how can you, whose soul I seemed to read  
The limpid eyes through, have declined so deep  
Even with him for consort ? I revolve 2660  
Much memory, pry into the looks and words  
Of that day's walk beneath the College wall,  
And nowhere can distinguish, in what gleams  
Only pure marble through my dusky past,  
A dubious cranny where such poison-seed 2665  
Might harbour, nourish what should yield to-day  
This dread ingredient for the cup I drink.

## THE INN ALBUM

Do not I recognize and honour truth  
In seeming?—take your truth and for return,  
Give you my truth, a no less precious gift? 2670  
You loved me: I believed you. I replied  
—How could I other? ‘*I was not my own,*’  
—No longer had the eyes to see, the ears  
To hear, the mind to judge, since heart and soul  
Now were another’s. My own right in me, 2675  
For well or ill, consigned away—my face  
Fronted the honest path, deflection whence  
Had shamed me in the furtive backward look  
At the late bargain—fit such chapman’s phrase!—  
As though—less hasty and more provident— 2680  
Waiting had brought advantage. Not for me  
The chapman’s chance! Yet while thus much was  
true,  
I spared you—as I knew you then—one more  
Concluding word which, truth no less, seemed best  
Buried away for ever. Take it now 2685  
Its power to pain is past! Four years—that day—  
Those limes that make the College avenue!  
I would that—friend and foe—by miracle,  
I had, that moment, seen into the heart  
Of either, as I now am taught to see! 2690  
I do believe I should have straight assumed  
My proper function, and sustained a soul,  
Nor aimed at being just sustained myself  
By some man’s soul—the weaker woman’s-want!  
So had I missed the momentary thrill 2695  
Of finding me in presence of a god,  
But gained the god’s own feeling when he gives  
Such thrill to what turns life from death before.  
‘*Gods many and Lords many,*’ says the Book:  
You would have yielded up your soul to me 2700  
—Not to the false god who has burned its clay  
In his own image. I had shed my love



## THE INN ALBUM

Like Spring dew on the clod all flowery thence,  
Not sent up a wild vapour to the sun  
That drinks and then disperses. Both of us 2705  
Blameworthy,—I first meet my punishment—  
And not so hard to bear. I breathe again!  
Forth from those arms' enwinding leprosy  
At last I struggle—uncontaminate :  
Why must I leave *you* pressing to the breast 2710  
That's all one plague-spot? Did you love me once?  
Then take love's last and best return! I think,  
Womanliness means only motherhood ;  
All love begins and ends there,—roams enough,  
But, having run the circle, rests at home. 2715  
Why is your expiation yet to make ?  
Pull shame with your own hands from your own  
head  
Now,—never wait the slow envelopment  
Submitted to by unelastic age !  
One fierce throe frees the sapling: flake on flake 2720  
Lull till they leave the oak snow-stupefied.  
Your heart retains its vital warmth—or why  
That blushing reassurance? Blush, young blood!  
Break from beneath this icy premature  
Captivity of wickedness—I warn 2725  
Back, in God's name! No fresh encroachment  
here !  
This May breaks all to bud—no Winter now !  
Friend, we are both forgiven! Sin no more !  
I am past sin now, so shall you become !  
Meanwhile I testify that, lying once, 2730  
My foe lied ever, most lied last of all.  
He, waking, whispered to your sense asleep  
The wicked counsel,—and assent might seem ;  
But, roused, your healthy indignation breaks  
The idle dream-pact. You would die—not dare 2735  
Confirm your dream-resolve,—nay, find the word

## THE INN ALBUM

That fits the deed to bear the light of day !  
Say I have justly judged you ! then farewell  
To blushing—nay, it ends in smiles, not tears !  
Why tears now ? I have justly judged, thank  
God ! ”

2740

He does blush boy-like, but the man speaks out,  
—Makes the due effort to surmount himself.

“ I don’t know what he wrote—how should I ? Nor  
How he could read my purpose which, it seems,  
He chose to somehow write—mistakenly  
Or else for mischief’s sake. I scarce believe  
My purpose put before you fair and plain  
Would need annoy so much ; but there ’s my luck—  
From first to last I blunder. Still, one more  
Turn at the target, try to speak my thought !  
Since he could guess my purpose, won’t you read  
Right what he set down wrong ? He said—let ’s  
think !

2745

2750

Ay, so !—he did begin by telling heaps  
Of tales about you. Now, you see—suppose  
Anyone told me—my own mother died  
Before I knew her—told me—to his cost !—  
Such tales about my own dead mother : why,  
You would not wonder surely if I knew,  
By nothing but my own heart’s help, he lied,  
Would you ? No reason ’s wanted in the case.  
So with you ! In they burnt on me, his tales,  
Much as when madhouse-inmates crowd around,  
Make captive any visitor and scream  
All sorts of stories of their keeper—he ’s  
Both dwarf and giant, vulture, wolf, dog, cat,  
Serpent and scorpion, yet man all the same ;  
Sane people soon see through the gibberish !  
I just made out, you somehow lived somewhere  
A life of shame—I can’t distinguish more—

2755

2760

2765

## THE INN ALBUM

Married or single—how, don't matter much : 2770  
Shame which himself had caused—that point was  
clear,  
That fact confessed—that thing to hold and keep.  
Oh, and he added some absurdity  
—That you were here to make me—ha, ha, ha !—  
Still love you, still of mind to die for you, 2775  
Ha, ha—as if that needed mighty pains !  
Now, foolish as . . . but never mind myself  
—What I am, what I am not, in the eye  
Of the world, is what I never cared for much.  
Fool then or no fool, not one single word 2780  
In the whole string of lies did I believe,  
But this—this only—if I choke, who cares ?—  
I believe somehow in your purity  
Perfect as ever ! Else what use is God ?  
He is God, and work miracles He can ! 2785  
Then, what shall I do ? Quite as clear, my course !  
They 've got a thing they call their Labyrinth  
I' the garden yonder : and my cousin played  
A pretty trick once, led and lost me deep  
Inside the briery maze of hedge round hedge ; 2790  
And there might I be staying now, stock-still,  
But that I laughing bade eyes follow nose  
And so straight pushed my path through let and  
stop  
And soon was out in the open, face all scratched,  
But well behind my back the prison-bars 2795  
In sorry plight enough, I promise you !  
So here : I won my way to truth through lies—  
Said, as I saw light,—if her shame be shame  
I 'll rescue and redeem her,—shame 's no shame ?  
Then, I 'll avenge, protect—redeem myself 2800  
The stupidest of sinners ! Here I stand !  
Dear,—let me once dare call you so,—you said  
Thus ought you to have done, four years ago,

## THE INN ALBUM

Such things and such ! Ay, dear, and what  
ought I ?

You were revealed to me : where 's gratitude, 2805  
Where 's memory even, where the gain of you  
Discernible in my low after-life  
Of fancied consolation ? why, no horse  
Once fed on corn, will, missing corn, go munch  
Mere thistles like a donkey ! I missed you, 2810  
And in your place found—him, made him my love,  
Ay, did I,—by this token, that he taught  
So much beast-nature that I meant . . . God  
knows

Whether I bow me to the dust enough ! . . .  
To marry—yes, my cousin here ! I hope 2815  
That was a master-stroke ! Take heart of hers,  
And give her hand of mine with no more heart  
Than now you see upon this brow I strike !  
What atom of a heart do I retain  
Not all yours ? Dear, you know it ! Easily 2820  
May she accord me pardon when I place  
My brow beneath her foot, if foot so deign,  
Since uttermost indignity is spared—  
Mere marriage and no love ! And all this time  
Not one word to the purpose ! Are you free ? 2825  
Only wait ! only let me serve—deserve  
Where you appoint and how you see the good !  
I have the will—perhaps the power—at least  
Means that have power against the world. For  
time—

Take my whole life for your experiment ! 2830  
If you are bound—in marriage, say—why, still,  
Still, sure, there 's something for a friend to do,  
Outside ? A mere well-wisher, understand !  
I 'll sit, my life long, at your gate, you know,  
Swing it wide open to let you and him 2835  
Pass freely,—and you need not look, much less

## THE INN ALBUM

Fling me a '*Thank you—are you there, old friend?*'  
Don't say that even : I should drop like shot !  
So I feel now at least : some day, who knows ?  
After no end of weeks and months and years 2840  
You might smile '*I believe you did your best !*'  
And that shall make my heart leap—leap such leap  
As lands the feet in Heaven to wait you there !  
Ah, there 's just one thing more ! How pale you  
look !

Why ? Are you angry ? If there 's, after all, 2845  
Worst come to worst—if still there somehow be  
The shame—I said was no shame,—none, I  
swear !—

In that case, if my hand and what it holds,—  
My name,—might be your safeguard now—at  
once—

Why, here 's the hand—you have the heart ! Of  
course— 2850

No cheat, no binding you, because I 'm bound,  
To let me off probation by one day,  
Week, month, year, lifetime ! Prove as you  
propose !

Here 's the hand with the name to take or leave !  
That 's all—and no great piece of news, I hope !” 2855

“Give me the hand, then !” she cries hastily.

“Quick, now ! I hear his footstep !”

Hand in hand

The couple face him as he enters, stops  
Short, stands surprised a moment, laughs away  
Surprise, resumes the much-experienced man. 2860

“So, you accept him ?”

“Till us death do part !”  
282

## THE INN ALBUM

“No longer? Come, that ’s right and rational!  
I fancied there was power in common sense,  
But did not know it worked thus promptly. Well—  
At last each understands the other, then? 2865  
Each drops disguise, then? So, at supper-time  
These masquerading people doff their gear,  
Grand Turk his pompous turban, Quakeress  
Her stiff-starched bib and tucker,—make-believe  
That only bothers when, ball-business done, 2870  
Nature demands champagne and *mayonnaise*.  
Just so has each of us sage three abjured  
His and her moral pet particular  
Pretension to superiority,  
And, cheek by jowl, we henceforth munch and  
joke! 2875  
Go, happy pair, paternally dismissed  
To live and die together—for a month,  
Discretion can award no more! Depart  
From whatsoe’er the calm sweet solitude  
Selected—Paris not improbably— 2880  
At month’s end, when the honeycomb’s left wax,  
—You, daughter, with a pocketful of gold  
Enough to find your village boys and girls  
In duffel cloaks and hobnailed shoes from May  
To—what ’s the phrase?—Christmas-come-never-  
mas! 2885  
You, son and heir of mine, shall re-appear  
Ere Spring-time, that ’s the ring-time, lose one  
leaf,  
And—not without regretful smack of lip  
The while you wipe it free of honey-smear—  
Marry the cousin, play the magistrate, 2890  
Stand for the county, prove perfection’s pink—  
Master of hounds, gay-coated dine—nor die  
Sooner than needs of gout, obesity,  
And sons at Christ Church! As for me,—ah me,

## THE INN ALBUM

I abdicate—retire on my success, 2895  
 Four years well occupied in teaching youth  
 —My son and daughter the exemplary!  
 Time for me to retire now, having placed  
 Proud on their pedestal the pair : in turn,  
 Let them do homage to their master ! You,— 2900  
 Well, your flushed cheek and flashing eye proclaim  
 Sufficiently your gratitude : you paid  
 The *honorarium*, the ten thousand pounds  
 To purpose, did you not ? I told you so !  
 And you, but, bless me, why so pale—so faint 2905  
 At influx of good fortune ? Certainly,  
 No matter how or why or whose the fault,  
 I save your life—save it, nor less nor more !  
 You blindly were resolved to welcome death  
 In that black boor-and-bumpkin-haunted hole 2910  
 Of his, the prig with all the preachments ! *You*  
 Installed as nurse and matron to the crones  
 And wenches, while there lay a world outside  
 Like Paris (which again I recommend)  
 In company and guidance of—first, this, 2915  
 Then—all in good time—some new friend as fit—  
 What if I were to say, some fresh myself,  
 As I once figured ? Each dog has his day,  
 And mine 's at sunset : what should old dog do  
 But eye young litters' frisky puppyhood ? 2920  
 Oh I shall watch this beauty and this youth  
 Frisk it in brilliance ! But don't fear ! Discreet,  
 I shall pretend to no more recognize  
 My quondam pupils than the doctor nods  
 When certain old acquaintances may cross 2925  
 His path in Park, or sit down prim beside  
 His plate at dinner-table : tip nor wink  
 Scares patients he has put, for reason good,  
 Under restriction,—maybe, talked sometimes  
 Of douche or horsewhip to,—for why ? because 2930

## THE INN ALBUM

The gentleman would crazily declare  
His best friend was—Iago! Ay, and worse—  
The lady, all at once grown lunatic,  
In suicidal monomania vowed,  
To save her soul, she needs must starve herself! 2935  
They 're cured now, both, and I tell nobody.  
Why don't you speak? Nay, speechless, each of you  
Can spare,—without unclasping plighted troth,—  
At least one hand to shake! Left-hands will do—  
Yours first, my daughter! Ah, it guards—it gripes 2940  
The precious Album fast—and prudently!  
As well obliterate the record there  
On page the last: allow me tear the leaf!  
Pray, now! And afterward, to make amends,  
What if all three of us contribute each 2945  
A line to that prelusive fragment,—help  
The embarrassed bard who broke out to break down  
Dumbfounded at such unforeseen success?  
'Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot'  
You begin—*place aux dames!* I'll prompt you then! 2950  
'Here do I take the good the gods allot!'  
Next you, Sir! What, still sulky? Sing, O Muse!  
'Here does my lord in full discharge his shot!'  
Now for the crowning flourish! mine shall be . . ."  
"Nothing to match your first effusion, mar 2955  
What was, is, shall remain your masterpiece!  
Authorship has the alteration-itch!  
No, I protest against erasure. Read,  
My friend!" (she gasps out). "Read and quickly  
read  
'Before us death do part,' what made you mine 2960  
And made me yours—the marriage-licence here!  
Decide if he is like to mend the same!"  
And so the lady, white to ghastliness,  
Manages somehow to display the page



## THE INN ALBUM

With left-hand only, while the right retains 2965  
The other hand, the young man's,—dreaming-  
drunk

He, with this drench of stupefying stuff,  
Eyes wide, mouth open,—half the idiot's stare  
And half the prophet's insight,—holding tight,  
All the same, by his one fact in the world— 2970  
The lady's right-hand : he but seems to read—  
Does not, for certain ; yet, how understand  
Unless he reads ?

So, understand he does,  
For certain. Slowly, word by word, *she* reads  
Aloud that licence—or that warrant, say. 2975

*“ ‘ One against two—and two that urge their odds  
To uttermost—I needs must try resource !  
Madam, I laid me prostrate, bade you spurn  
Body and soul : you spurned and safely spurned  
So you had spared me the superfluous taunt 2980  
“ Prostration means no power to stand erect,  
Stand, trampling on who trampled—prostrate now ! ”  
So, with my other fool-foe : I was fain  
Let the boy touch me with the buttoned foil,  
And him the infection gains, he too must needs 2985  
Catch up the butcher's cleaver. Be it so !  
Since play turns earnest, here 's my serious fence.  
He loves you ; he demands your love : both know  
What love means in my language. Love him then !  
Pursuant to a pact, love pays my debt : 2990  
Therefore, deliver me from him, thereby  
Likewise delivering from me yourself !  
For, hesitate—much more, refuse consent—  
I tell the whole truth to your husband. Flat  
Cards lie on table, in our gamester-phrase ! 2995  
Consent—you stop my mouth, the only way.’ ”*

## THE INN ALBUM

“I did well, trusting instinct : knew your hand  
Had never joined with his in fellowship  
Over this pact of infamy. You known—  
As he was known through every nerve of me. 3000  
Therefore I ‘*stopped his mouth the only way*’  
But *my* way ! none was left for you, my friend—  
The loyal—near, the loved one ! No—no—no !  
Threaten ? Chastise ? The coward would but quail.  
Conquer who can, the cunning of the snake ! 3005  
Stamp out his slimy strength from tail to head,  
And still you leave vibration of the tongue.  
His malice had redoubled—not on me  
Who, myself, choose my own refining fire—  
But on poor unsuspecting innocence ; 3010  
And,—victim,—to turn executioner  
Also—that feat effected, forky tongue  
Had done indeed its office ! Once snake’s ‘*mouth*’  
Thus ‘*open*’—how could mortal ‘*stop it*’ ?”

“So !”

A tiger-flash—yell, spring, and scream : halloo ! 3015  
Death’s out and on him, has and holds him—ugh !  
But *ne trucidet coram populo*  
*Juvenis senem !* Right the Horatian rule !

There, see how soon a quiet comes to pass !

### VIII

The youth is somehow by the lady’s side. 3020  
His right-hand grasps her right-hand once again.  
Both gaze on the dead body. Hers the word.

“And that was good but useless. Had I lived  
The danger was to dread : but, dying now—

## THE INN ALBUM

Himself would hardly become talkative, 3025  
Since talk no more means torture. Fools—what  
fools

These wicked men are ! Had I borne four years,  
Four years of weeks and months and days and  
nights,

Inured me to the consciousness of life  
Coiled round by his life, with the tongue to ply,— 3030

But that I bore about me, for prompt use  
At urgent need, the thing that '*stops the mouth*'  
And stays the venom ? Since such need was now  
Or never,—how should use not follow need ?

Bear witness for me, I withdraw from life 3035

By virtue of the licence—warrant, say,  
That blackens yet this Album—white again,  
Thanks still to my one friend who tears the page !

Now, let me write the line of supplement,  
As counselled by my foe there : '*each a line !*' " 3040

And she does falteringly write to end.

*" I die now through the villain who lies dead,  
Righteously slain. He would have outraged me,  
So, my defender slew him. God protect  
The right ! Where wrong lay, I bear witness now. 3045  
Let man believe me, whose last breath is spent  
In blessing my defender from my soul !"*

And so ends the Inn Album.

As she dies,  
Begins outside a voice that sounds like song,  
And is indeed half song though meant for speech 3050  
Muttered in time to motion—stir of heart  
That unsubduably must bubble forth  
To match the fawn-step as it mounts the stair.

## THE INN ALBUM

"All 's ended and all 's over ! Verdict found  
 ' *Not guilty* '—prisoner forthwith set free, 3055  
 Mid cheers the Court pretends to disregard !  
 Now Portia, now for Daniel, late severe,  
 At last appeased, benignant ! ' *This young man—*  
*Hem—has the young man's foibles but no fault.*  
*He 's virgin soil—a friend must cultivate.* 3060  
*I think no plant called ' love ' grows wild—a friend*  
*May introduce, and name the bloom, the fruit !'*  
 Here somebody dares wave a handkerchief—  
 She 'll want to hide her face with presently !  
 Good-bye then ! ' *Cigno fedel, cigno fedel,* 3065  
*Addio !'* Now, was ever such mistake—  
 Ever such foolish ugly omen ? Pshaw !  
 Wagner, beside ! ' *Amo te solo, te*  
*Solo amai !'* That 's worth fifty such !  
 But, mum, the grave face at the opened door !" 3070

And so the good gay girl, with eyes and cheeks  
 Diamond and damask,—cheeks so white erewhile  
 Because of a vague fancy, idle fear  
 Chased on reflection !—pausing, taps discreet ;  
 And then, to give herself a countenance, 3075  
 Before she comes upon the pair inside,  
 Loud—the oft-quoted, long-laughed-over line—  
 " ' *Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot !'*  
 Open the door !"

No : let the curtain fall !



THE  
AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS



MAY I be permitted to chat a little, by way of recreation, at the end of a somewhat toilsome and perhaps fruitless adventure?

If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language. The use of certain allowable constructions which, happening to be out of daily favour, are all the more appropriate to archaic workmanship, is no violence: but I would be tolerant for once,—in the case of so immensely famous an original,—of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear: while, with respect to amplifications and embellishments,—anything rather than, with the good farmer, experience that most signal of mortifications, “to gape for Æschylus and get Theognis.” I should especially decline,—what may appear to brighten up a passage,—the employment of a new word for some old one—*πόνος*, or *μέγας*, or *τέλος*, with its congeners, recurring four times in three lines: for though such substitution may be in itself perfectly justifiable, yet this exercise of ingenuity ought to be within the competence of the unaided English reader if he likes to show himself ingenious. Learning Greek teaches Greek, and nothing else: certainly not common sense, if that have failed to precede the teaching. Further,—



## AGAMEMNON

if I obtained a mere strict bald version of thing by thing, or at least word pregnant with thing, I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet. And lastly, when presented with these ideas, I should expect the result to prove very hard reading indeed if it were meant to resemble Æschylus, *ξιμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδιος*, "not easy to understand," in the opinion of his stoutest advocate among the ancients; while, I suppose, even modern scholarship sympathizes with that early declaration of the redoubtable Salmasius, when, looking about for an example of the truly obscure for the benefit of those who found obscurity in the sacred books, he protested that this particular play leaves them all behind in this respect, with their "Hebraisms, Syriasms, Hellenisms, and the whole of such bag and baggage."<sup>1</sup> For, over and above the purposed ambiguity of the Chorus, the text is sadly corrupt, probably interpolated, and certainly mutilated; and no unlearned person enjoys the scholar's privilege of trying his fancy upon each obstacle whenever he comes to a stoppage, and effectually clearing the way by suppressing what seems to lie in it.

All I can say for the present performance is, that I have done as I would be done by, if need were. Should anybody, without need, honour my translation by a comparison with the original,

<sup>1</sup> "Quis Æschylum possit affirmare Græce nunc scienti magis patere explicabilem quam Evangelia aut Epistolas Apostolicas? Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis Hebraismis et Syriasms et tota Hellenisticæ suppellectili vel farragine."

SALMASIUS *de Hellenistica*, Epist. Dedic.

## AGAMEMNON

I beg him to observe that, following no editor exclusively, I keep to the earlier readings so long as sense can be made out of them, but disregard, I hope, little of importance in recent criticism so far as I have fallen in with it. Fortunately, the poorest translation, provided only it be faithful,—though it reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems,—will not only suffice to display what an eloquent friend maintains to be the all-in-all of poetry—"the action of the piece"—but may help to illustrate his assurance that "the Greeks are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated, because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys . . . not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!"<sup>1</sup> So may all happen!

Just a word more on the subject of my spelling—in a transcript from the Greek and there exclusively—Greek names and places precisely as does the Greek author. I began this practice, with great innocence of intention, some six-and-thirty years ago. Leigh Hunt, I remember, was accustomed to speak of his gratitude, when ignorant of Greek, to those writers (like Goldsmith) who had obliged him by using English characters, so that he might relish, for instance, the smooth quality of such a phrase as "hapalunetai galené;" he said also that Shelley was indignant at "Firenze" having displaced the

<sup>1</sup> *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, Preface.

## AGAMEMNON

Dantesque "Fiorenza," and would contemptuously English the intruder "Firence." I supposed I was doing a simple thing enough : but there has been till lately much astonishment at *os* and *us*, *ai* and *oi*, representing the same letters in Greek. Of a sudden, however, whether in translation or out of it, everybody seems committing the offence, although the adoption of *u* for *v* still presents such difficulty that it is a wonder how we have hitherto escaped "Eyrripides." But there existed a sturdy Briton who, Ben Jonson informs us, wrote "The Life of the Emperor Anthony Pie"—whom we now acquiesce in as Antoninus Pius : for "with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin." Yet there is, on all sides, much profession of respect for what Keats called "vowelled Greek"—"consonanted," one would expect ; and, in a criticism upon a late admirable translation of something of my own, it was deplored that, in a certain verse corresponding in measure to the fourteenth of the sixth Pythian Ode, "neither Professor Jebb in his Greek, nor Mr. Browning in his English, could emulate that matchlessly musical γόνον ἰδὼν κάλλιστον ἀνδρῶν." Now, undoubtedly, "Seeing her son the fairest of men" has more sense than sound to boast of : but then, would not an Italian roll us out "Rimirando il figliuolo bellissimo degli uomini !" whereat Pindar, no less than Professor Jebb and Mr. Browning, τριακτῆρος οἶχετ' αἰ τυχών.

It is recorded in the annals of Art<sup>1</sup> that there was once upon a time, practising so far north as Stockholm, a painter and picture-cleaner—sire of a less unhappy son—Old Muytens : and the annalist,

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres à un jeune Prince*, traduites du Suédois.

## AGAMEMNON

Baron de Tessé, has not concealed his profound dissatisfaction at Old Muytens' conceit "to have himself had something to do with the work of whatever master of eminence might pass through his hands." Whence it was,—the Baron goes on to deplore,—that much detriment was done to that excellent piece "The Recognition of Achilles," by Rubens, through the perversity of Old Muytens, "who must needs take on him to beautify every nymph of the twenty by the bestowment of a widened eye and an enlarged mouth." I, at least, have left eyes and mouths everywhere as I found them, and this conservatism is all that claims praise for—what is, after all, ἀκέλευστος ἄμισθος αἰοιδά. No, neither "uncommanded" nor "unrewarded:" since it was commanded of me by my venerated friend Thomas Carlyle, and rewarded will it indeed become if I am permitted to dignify it by the prefatory insertion of his dear and noble name.

R. B.

LONDON: *October 1st, 1877.*

## *PERSONS*

Warder

*Choros of Old Men*

KLUTAIMNESTRA

TALTHUBIOS, *Herald*

AGAMEMNON

KASSANDRA

AIGISTHOS

# THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS

1877

WARDER

THE gods I ask deliverance from these labours,  
Watch of a year's length whereby, slumbering  
through it

On the Atreidai's roofs on elbow,—dog-like—  
I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage,  
And those that bring to men winter and summer 5  
Bright dynasts, as they pride them in the æther  
—Stars, when they wither, and the uprisings of them.  
And now on ward I wait the torch's token,  
The glow of fire, shall bring from Troia message  
And word of capture : so prevails audacious 10  
The man's-way-planning hoping heart of woman.  
But when I, driven from night-rest, dew-drenched  
hold to

This couch of mine—not looked upon by visions,  
Since fear instead of sleep still stands beside me,  
So as that fast I fix in sleep no eyelids— 15  
And when to sing or chirp a tune I fancy,  
For slumber such song-remedy infusing,  
I wail then, for this House's fortune groaning,  
Not, as of old, after the best ways governed.  
Now, lucky be deliverance from these labours, 20  
At good news—the appearing dusky fire !  
O hail, thou lamp of night, a day-long lightness

## AGAMEMNON

Revealing, and of dances the ordainment !  
 Halloo, halloo !  
 To Agamemnon's wife I show, by shouting, 25  
 That, from bed starting up at once, i' the household  
 Joyous acclaim, good-omened to this torch-blaze,  
 She send aloft, if haply Ilion's city  
 Be taken, as the beacon boasts announcing.  
 Ay, and, for me, myself will dance a prelude, 30  
 For, that my masters' dice drop right, I'll reckon :  
 Since thrice-six has it thrown to me, this signal.  
 Well, may it hap that, as he comes, the loved hand  
 O' the household's lord I may sustain with this hand !  
 As for the rest, I'm mute : on tongue a big ox 35  
 Has trodden. Yet this House, if voice it take  
     should,  
 Most plain would speak. So, willing I myself speak  
 To those who know : to who know not—I'm  
     blankness.

### CHOROS

The tenth year this, since Priamos' great match,  
 King Menelaos, Agamemnon King, 40  
 —The strenuous yoke-pair of the Atreidai's honour  
 Two-throned, two-sceptred, whereof Zeus was  
     donor—  
 Did from this land the aid, the armament despatch,  
 The thousand-sailored force of Argives clamouring  
 "Ares" from out the indignant breast, as fling 45  
 Passion forth vultures which, because of grief  
 Away,—as are their young ones,—with the thief,  
 Lofty above their brood-nests wheel in ring,  
 Row round and round with oar of either wing,  
 Lament the bedded chicks, lost labour that was  
     love : 50  
 Which hearing, one above  
 —Whether Apollon, Pan or Zeus—that wail,

## AGAMEMNON

Sharp-piercing bird-shriek of the guests who fare  
Housemates with gods in air—  
Suchanone sends, against who these assail, 55  
What, late-sent, shall not fail  
Of punishing—Erinus. Here as there,  
The Guardian of the Guest, Zeus, the excelling one,  
Sends against Alexandros either son  
Of Atreus : for that wife, the many-husbanded, 60  
Appointing many a tug that tries the limb,  
While the knee plays the prop in dust, while, shred  
To morsels, lies the spear-shaft ; in those grim  
Marriage-prolusions when their Fury wed  
Danaoi and Troes, both alike. All 's said : 65  
Things are where things are, and, as fate has willed,  
So shall they be fulfilled.  
Not gently-grieving, not just doling out  
The drops of expiation—no, nor tears distilled—  
Shall he we know of bring the hard about 70  
To soft—that intense ire  
At those mock rites unsanctified by fire.  
But we pay nought here : through our flesh, age-  
weighed,  
Left out from who gave aid  
In that day,—we remain, 75  
Staying on staves a strength  
The equal of a child's at length.  
For when young marrow in the breast doth reign,  
That 's the old man's match,—Ares out of place  
In either : but in oldest age's case, 80  
Foliage a-fading, why, he wends his way  
On three feet, and, no stronger than a child,  
Wanders about gone wild,  
A dream in day.

But thou, Tundareus' daughter, Klutaimnestra  
queen, 85



## AGAMEMNON

What need? What new? What having heard  
     or seen,  
 By what announcement's tidings, everywhere  
 Settest thou, round about, the sacrifice a-flare?  
 For, of all gods the city-swaying,  
 Those supernal, those infernal, 90  
 Those of the fields', those of the mart's obeying,—  
 The altars blaze with gifts;  
 And here and there, heaven-high the torch uplifts  
 Flame—medicated with persuasions mild,  
 With foul admixture unbeguiled— 95  
 Of holy unguent, from the clotted chrism  
 Brought from the palace, safe in its abysm.  
 Of these things, speaking what may be indeed  
 Both possible and lawful to concede,  
 Healer do thou become!—of this solicitude 100  
 Which, now, stands plainly forth of evil mood,  
 And, then . . . but from oblations, hope, to-day  
 Gracious appearing, wards away  
 From soul the insatiate care,  
 The sorrow at my breast, devouring there! 105

Empowered am I to sing  
 The omens, what their force which, journeying,  
 Rejoiced the potentates:  
 (For still, from God, inflates  
 My breast song-suasion: age, 110  
 Born to the business, still such war can wage)  
 —How the fierce bird against the Teukris land  
 Despatched, with spear and executing hand,  
 The Achaian's two-throned empery—o'er Hellas'  
     youth  
 Two rulers with one mind: 115  
 The birds' king to these kings of ships, on high,  
 —The black sort, and the sort that's white  
     behind,—

## AGAMEMNON

Appearing by the palace, on the spear-throw side,  
In right sky-regions, visible far and wide,—  
Devouring a hare-creature, great with young, 120  
Baulked of more racings they, as she from whom  
they sprung !

Ah, Linos, say—ah, Linos, song of wail !  
But may the good prevail !

The prudent army-prophet seeing two  
The Atreidai, two their tempers, knew 125  
Those feasting on the hare

The armament-conductors were ;  
And thus he spoke, explaining signs in view.  
“ In time, this outset takes the town of Priamos :  
But all before its towers,—the people’s wealth that  
was, 130

Of flocks and herds,—as sure, shall booty-sharing  
thence

Drain to the dregs away, by battle violence.  
Only, have care lest grudge of any god disturb  
With cloud the unsullied shine of that great force,  
the curb

Of Troia, struck with damp 135  
Beforehand in the camp !

For envyingly is  
The virgin Artemis  
Toward—her father’s flying hounds—this House—  
The sacrificers of the piteous 140  
And cowering beast,  
Brood and all, ere the birth : she hates the eagles’  
feast.

Ah, Linos, say—ah, Linos, song of wail !  
But may the good prevail !

“ Thus ready is the beauteous one with help 145  
To those small dewdrop-things fierce lions whelp,

## AGAMEMNON

And udder-loving litter of each brute  
 That roams themead; and therefore makes she suit,  
 The fair one, for fulfilment to the end  
 Of things these signs portend— 150  
 Which partly smile, indeed, but partly scowl—  
 The phantasms of the fowl.  
 I call Ieïos Paian to avert  
 She work the Danaoi hurt  
 By any thwarting waftures, long and fast 155  
 Holdings from sail of ships :  
 And sacrifice, another than the last,  
 She for herself precipitate—  
 Something unlawful, feast for no man's lips,  
 Builder of quarrels, with the House cognate— 160  
 Having in awe no husband : for remains  
 A frightful, backward-darting in the path,  
 Wily house-keeping chronicler of wrath,  
 That has to punish that old children's fate !"  
 Such things did Kalchas,—with abundant gains 165  
 As well,—vociferate,  
 Predictions from the birds, in journeying,  
 Above the abode of either king.  
 With these, symphonious, sing—  
 Ah, Linos, say—ah, Linos, song of wail ! 170  
 But may the good prevail !  
  
 Zeus, whosoe'er he be,—if that express  
 Aught dear to him on whom I call—  
 So do I him address.  
 I cannot liken out, by all 175  
 Admeasurement of powers,  
 Any but Zeus for refuge at such hours,  
 If veritably needs I must  
 From off my soul its vague care-burthen thrust.  
  
 Not—whosoever was the great of yore, 180  
 Bursting to bloom with bravery all round—

## AGAMEMNON

Is in our mouths : he was, but is no more.  
 And who it was that after came to be,  
 Met the thrice-throwing wrestler,—he  
 Is also gone to ground. 185  
 But “Zeus”—if any, heart and soul, that name—  
 Shouting the triumph-praise—proclaim,  
 Complete in judgment shall that man be found.  
 Zeus, who leads onward mortals to be wise,  
 Appoints that suffering masterfully teach. 190  
 In sleep, before the heart of each,  
 A woe-remembering travail sheds in dew  
 Discretion,—ay, and melts the unwilling too  
 By what, perchance, may be a graciousness  
 Of gods, enforced no less,— 195  
 As they, commanders of the crew,  
 Assume the awful seat.

And then the old leader of the Achaian fleet,  
 Disparaging no seer—  
 With bated breath to suit misfortune’s inrush here 200  
 —(What time it laboured, that Achaian host,  
 By stay from sailing,—every pulse at length  
 Emptied of vital strength,—  
 Hard over Kalchis shore-bound, current-crost  
 In Aulis station,—while the winds which post 205  
 From Strumon, ill-delayers, famine-fraught,  
 Tempters of man to sail where harbourage is naught,  
 Spend thrifts of ships and cables, turning time  
 To twice the length,—these carded, by delay,  
 To less and less away 210  
 The Argeians’ flowery prime :  
 And when a remedy more grave and grand  
 Than aught before,—yea, for the storm and  
 dearth,—  
 The prophet to the foremost in command  
 Shrieked forth, as cause of this 215

## AGAMEMNON

Adducing Artemis,  
So that the Atreidai striking staves on earth  
Could not withhold the tear)—  
Then did the king, the elder, speak this clear.

“ Heavy the fate, indeed,—to disobey ! 220  
Yet heavy if my child I slay,  
The adornment of my household : with the tide  
Of virgin-slaughter, at the altar-side,  
A father’s hands defiling : which the way  
Without its evils, say ? 225  
How shall I turn fleet-fugitive,  
Failing of duty to allies ?  
Since for a wind-abating sacrifice  
And virgin blood,—’t is right they strive,  
Nay, madden with desire. 230  
Well may it work them—this that they require ! ”

But when he underwent necessity’s  
Yoke-trace,—from soul blowing unhallowed  
change  
Unclean, abominable,—thence—another man—  
The audacious mind of him began 235  
Its wildest range.  
For this it is gives mortals hardihood—  
Some vice-devising miserable mood  
Of madness, and first woe of all the brood.  
The sacrificer of his daughter—strange !— 240  
He dared become, to expedite  
Woman-avenging warfare,—anchors weighed  
With such prelusive rite !

Prayings and callings “ Father ”—naught they  
made  
Of these, and of the virgin-age,— 245  
Captains heart-set on war to wage !

## AGAMEMNON

His ministrants, vows done, the father bade—  
 Kid-like, above the altar, swathed in pall,  
 Take her—lift high, and have no fear at all,  
 Head-downward, and the fair mouth's guard 250  
 And frontage hold,—press hard  
 From utterance a curse against the House  
 By dint of bit—violence bridling speech.  
 And as to ground her saffron-vest she shed,  
 She smote the sacrificers all and each 255  
 With arrow sweet and piteous,  
 From the eye only sped,—  
 Significant of will to use a word,  
 Just as in pictures : since, full many a time,  
 In her sire's guest-hall, by the well-heaped board 260  
 Had she made music,—lovingly with chime  
 Of her chaste voice, that unpolluted thing,  
 Honoured the third libation,—paian that should  
     bring  
 Good fortune to the sire she loved so well.

What followed—those things I nor saw nor  
     tell. 265  
 But Kalchas' arts,—whate'er they indicate,—  
 Miss of fulfilment never : it is fate.  
 True, justice makes, in sufferers, a desire  
 To know the future woe preponderate.  
 But—hear before is need ? 270  
 To that, farewell and welcome ! 't is the same,  
     indeed,  
 As grief beforehand : clearly, part for part,  
 Conformably to Kalchas' art,  
 Shall come the event.  
 But be they as they may, things subsequent,— 275  
 What is to do, prosperity betide  
 E'en as we wish it !—we, the next allied,  
 Sole guarding barrier of the Apian land.

## AGAMEMNON

I am come, reverencing power in thee,  
O Klutaimnestra ! For 't is just we bow 280  
To the ruler's wife,—the male-seat man-bereaved.  
But if thou, having heard good news,—or none,—  
For good news' hope dost sacrifice thus wide,  
I would hear gladly : art thou mute,—no grudge !

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Good-news-announcer, may—as is the by-word— 285  
Morn become, truly,—news from Night his  
mother !  
But thou shalt learn joy past all hope of hearing.  
Priamos' city have the Argeioi taken.

### CHOROS

How sayest ? The word, from want of faith,  
escaped me.

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Troia the Achaioi hold : do I speak plainly ? 290

### CHOROS

Joy overcreeps me, calling forth the tear-drop.

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Right ! for, that glad thou art, thine eye convicts  
thee.

### CHOROS

For—what to thee, of all this, trusty token ?

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

What 's here ! how else ? unless the god have  
cheated.

### CHOROS

Haply thou flattering shows of dreams respectest ? 295  
308

# AGAMEMNON

KLUTAIMNESTRA

No fancy would I take of soul sleep-burthened.

CHOROS

But has there puffed thee up some unwinged omen?

KLUTAIMNESTRA

As a young maid's my mind thou mockest grossly.

CHOROS

Well, at what time was—even sacked, the city?

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Of this same mother Night—the dawn, I tell thee. 300

CHOROS

And who of messengers could reach this swiftness?

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Hephaistos—sending a bright blaze from Idé.  
Beacon did beacon send, from fire the poster,  
Hitherward : Idé to the rock Hermaian  
Of Lemnos : and a third great torch o' the island 305  
Zeus' seat received in turn, the Athoan summit.  
And,—so upsoaring as to stride sea over,  
The strong lamp-voyager, and all for joyance—  
Did the gold-glorious splendour, any sun like,  
Pass on—the pine-tree—to Makistos' watch-place; 310  
Who did not,—tardy,—caught, no wits about him,  
By sleep,—decline his portion of the missive.  
And far the beacon's light, on stream Euripos  
Arriving, made aware Messapios' warders,  
And up they lit in turn, played herald onwards, 315  
Kindling with flame a heap of grey old heather.  
And, strengthening still, the lamp, decaying  
nowise,



## AGAMEMNON

Springing o'er Plain Asopos,—full-moon-fashion  
Effulgent,—toward the crag of Mount Kithairon,  
Roused a new rendering-up of fire the escort— 320  
And light, far escort, lacked no recognition  
O' the guard—as burning more than burnings  
told you.

And over Lake Gorgopis light went leaping,  
And, at Mount Aigioplanktos safe arriving,  
Enforced the law—"to never stint the fire-stuff." 325  
And they send, lighting up with ungrudged vigour,  
Of flame a huge beard, ay, the very foreland  
So as to strike above, in burning onward,  
The look-out which commands the Strait Saronic.  
Then did it dart until it reached the outpost 330  
Mount Arachnaïos here, the city's neighbour ;  
And then darts to this roof of the Atreidai  
This light of Idé's fire not unforefathered !  
Such are the rules prescribed the flambeau-bearers :  
He beats that 's first and also last in running. 335  
Such is the proof and token I declare thee,  
My husband having sent me news from Troia.

### CHOROS

The gods, indeed, anon will I pray, woman !  
But now, these words to hear, and sate my wonder  
Thoroughly, I am fain—if twice thou tell them. 340

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Troia do the Achaioi hold, this same day.  
I think a noise—no mixture—reigns i' the city.  
Sour wine and unguent pour thou in one vessel—  
Standers-apart, not lovers, wouldst thou style  
them :  
And so, of captives and of conquerors, partwise 345  
The voices are to hear, of fortune diverse.  
For those, indeed, upon the bodies prostrate

## AGAMEMNON

Of husbands, brothers, children upon parents  
—The old men, from a throat that 's free no longer,  
Shriekingly wail the death-doom of their dearest : 350  
While these—the after-battle hungry labour,  
Which prompts night-faring, marshals them to  
breakfast

On the town's store, according to no billet  
Of sharing, but as each drew lot of fortune.  
In the spear-captured Troic habitations 355  
House they already : from the frosts upæthral  
And dews delivered, will they, luckless creatures,  
Without a watch to keep, slumber all night  
through.

And if they fear the gods, the city-guarders,  
And the gods' structures of the conquered country, 360  
They may not—capturers—soon in turn be captive.  
But see no prior lust befall the army  
To sack things sacred—by gain-cravings van-  
quished !

For there needs homeward the return's salvation,  
To round the new limb back o' the double race-  
course. 365

And guilty to the gods if came the army,  
Awakened up the sorrow of those slaughtered  
Might be—should no outbursting evils happen.  
But may good beat—no turn to see i' the balance !  
For, many benefits I want the gain of. 370

## CHOROS

Woman, like prudent man thou kindly speakest.  
And I, thus having heard thy trusty tokens,  
The gods to rightly hail forthwith prepare me ;  
For, grace that must be paid has crowned our  
labours.

O Zeus the king, and friendly Night 375

## AGAMEMNON

Of these brave boons bestower—  
 Thou who didst fling on Troia's every tower  
 The o'er-roofing snare, that neither great thing  
     might,  
 Nor any of the young ones, overpass  
 Captivity's great sweep-net—one and all 380  
 Of Até held in thrall !  
 Ay, Zeus I fear—the guest's friend great—who was  
 The doer of this, and long since bent  
 The bow on Alexandros with intent  
 That neither wide o' the white 385  
 Nor o'er the stars the foolish dart should light.  
 The stroke of Zeus—they have it, as men say !  
 This, at least, from the source track forth we may !  
 As he ordained, so has he done.  
 “ No ”—said someone— 390  
 “ The gods think fit to care  
 Nowise for mortals, such  
 As those by whom the good and fair  
 Of things denied their touch  
 Is trampled ! ” but he was profane. 395  
 That they do care, has been made plain  
 To offspring of the over-bold,  
 Outbreathing “ Ares ” greater than is just—  
 Houses that spill with more than they can hold,  
 More than is best for man. Be man's what must 400  
 Keep harm off, so that in himself he find  
 Sufficiency—the well-endowed of mind !  
 For there 's no bulwark in man's wealth to him  
 Who, through a surfeit, kicks—into the dim  
 And disappearing—Right's great altar.

Yes— 405

It urges him, the sad persuasiveness,  
 Até's insufferable child that schemes  
 Treason beforehand : and all cure is vain.

## AGAMEMNON

It is not hidden : out it glares again,  
 A light dread-lamping-mischief, just as gleams 410  
 The badness of the bronze ;  
 Through rubbing, puttings to the touch,  
 Black-clotted is he, judged at once.  
 He seeks—the boy—a flying bird to clutch,  
 The insufferable brand 415  
 Setting upon the city of his land  
 Whereof not any god hears prayer ;  
 While him who brought about such evils there,  
 That unjust man, the god in grapple throws.  
 Such an one, Paris goes 420  
 Within the Atreidai's house—  
 Shamed the guest's board by robbery of the spouse.

And, leaving to her townsmen throngs a-spread  
 With shields, and spear-thrusts of sea-armament,  
 And bringing Ilion, in a dowry's stead, 425  
 Destruction—swiftly through the gates she went,  
 Daring the undareable. But many a groan outbroke  
 From prophets of the House as thus they spoke.  
 “Woe, woe the House, the House and Rulers,—woe  
 The marriage-bed and dints 430  
 A husband's love imprints !  
 There she stands silent ! meets no honour—no  
 Shame—sweetest still to see of things gone long ago !  
 And, through desire of one across the main,  
 A ghost will seem within the house to reign : 435  
 And hateful to the husband is the grace  
 Of well-shaped statues : from—in place of eyes  
 Those blanks—all Aphrodite dies.

“ But dream-appearing mournful fantasies—  
 There they stand, bringing grace that 's vain. 440  
 For vain 't is, when brave things one seems to view ;  
 The fantasy has floated off, hands through ;  
 Gone, that appearance,—nowise left to creep,—

## AGAMEMNON

On wings, the servants in the paths of sleep !”  
Woes, then, in household and on hearth, are such 445  
As these—and woes surpassing these by much.  
But not these only : everywhere—  
For those who from the land  
Of Hellas issued in a band,  
Sorrow, the heart must bear, 450  
Sits in the home of each, conspicuous there.  
Many a circumstance, at least,  
Touches the very breast.  
For those  
Whom any sent away,—he knows : 455  
And in the live man’s stead,  
Armour and ashes reach  
The house of each.

For Ares, gold-exchanger for the dead,  
And balance-holder in the fight o’ the spear, 460  
Due-weight from Ilion sends—  
What moves the tear on tear—  
A charred scrap to the friends :  
Filling with well-packed ashes every urn,  
For man—that was—the sole return. 465  
And they groan—praising much, the while,  
Now this man as experienced in the strife,  
Now that, fallen nobly on a slaughtered pile,  
Because of—not his own—another’s wife.  
But things there be, one barks, 470  
When no man harks :  
A surreptitious grief that ’s grudge  
Against the Atreidai who first sought the judge.  
But some there, round the rampart, have  
In Ilian earth, each one his grave : 475  
All fair-formed as at birth,  
It hid them—what they have and hold—the hostile  
earth.

## AGAMEMNON

And big with anger goes the city's word,  
 And pays a debt by public curse incurred.  
 And ever with me—as about to hear 480  
 A something night-involved—remains my fear :  
 Since of the many-slayers—not  
 Unwatching are the gods.  
 The black Erinues, at due periods—  
 Whoever gains the lot 485  
 Of fortune with no right—  
 Him, by life's strain and stress  
 Back-again-beaten from success,  
 They strike blind : and among the out-of-sight  
 For who has got to be, avails no might. 490  
 The being praised outrageously  
 Is grave, for at the eyes of such an one  
 Is launched, from Zeus, the thunder-stone.  
 Therefore do I decide  
 For so much and no more prosperity 495  
 Than of his envy passes unespied.  
 Neither a city-sacker would I be,  
 Nor life, myself by others captive, see.

A swift report has gone our city through,  
 From fire, the good-news messenger : if true, 500  
 Who knows ? Or is it not a god-sent lie ?  
 Who is so childish and deprived of sense  
 That, having, at announcements of the flame  
 Thus novel, felt his own heart fired thereby,  
 He then shall at a change of evidence, 505  
 Be worsted just the same ?  
 It is conspicuous in a woman's nature,  
 Before its view to take a grace for granted :  
 Too trustful,—on her boundary, usurpature  
 Is swiftly made ; 510  
 But swiftly, too, decayed,  
 The glory perishes by woman vaunted.

# AGAMEMNON

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

Soon shall we know—of these light-bearing torches,  
And beacons and exchanges, fire with fire—  
If they are true, indeed, or if, dream-fashion, 515  
This gladsome light came and deceived our judgment.

Yon herald from the shore I see, o'ershadowed  
With boughs of olive: dust, mud's thirsty brother,  
Close neighbours on his garb, thus testify me  
That neither voiceless, nor yet kindling for thee 520  
Mountain-wood-flame, shall he explain by fire-smoke:

But either tell out more the joyance, speaking. . . .  
Word contrary to which, I aught but love it!  
For may good be—to good that's known—appendage!

## CHOROS

Whoever prays for aught else to this city 525  
—May he himself reap fruit of his mind's error!

## HERALD

Ha, my forefathers' soil of earth Argeian!  
Thee, in this year's tenth light, am I returned to—  
Of many broken hopes, on one hope chancing;  
For never prayed I, in this earth Argeian 530  
Dying, to share my part in tomb the dearest.  
Now, hail thou earth, and hail thou also, sunlight,  
And Zeus, the country's lord, and king the Puthian  
From bow no longer urging at us arrows!  
Enough, beside Skamandros, cam'st thou adverse: 535  
Now, contrary, be saviour thou and healer,  
O king Apollon! And gods conquest-granting,  
All—I invoke too, and my tutelary  
Hermes, dear herald, heralds' veneration,—

## AGAMEMNON

And Heroes our forthsenders,—friendly, once more 540  
The army to receive, the war-spear's leavings !  
Ha, mansions of my monarchs, roofs beloved,  
And awful seats, and deities sun-fronting—  
Receive with pomp your monarch, long time  
absent !

For he comes bringing light in night-time to you, 545  
In common with all these—king Agamemnon.  
But kindly greet him—for clear shows your duty—  
Who has dug under Troia with the mattock  
Of Zeus the Avenger, whereby plains are out-  
ploughed,

Altars unrecognizable, and gods' shrines, 550  
And the whole land's seed thoroughly has perished.  
And such a yoke-strap having cast round Troia,  
The elder king Atreides, happy man—he  
Comes to be honoured, worthiest of what mortals  
Now are. Nor Paris nor the accomplice-city 555  
Outvaunts their deed as more than they are done-  
by :

For, in a suit for rape and theft found guilty,  
He missed of plunder and, in one destruction,  
Fatherland, house and home has mowed to atoms :  
Debts the Priamidai have paid twice over. 560

### CHOROS

Hail, herald from the army of Achaians !

### HERALD

I hail :—to die, will gainsay gods no longer !

### CHOROS

Love of this fatherland did exercise thee ?

### HERALD

So that I weep, at least, with joy, my eyes full.



# AGAMEMNON

CHOROS

What, of this gracious sickness were ye gainers? 565

HERALD

How now? instructed, I this speech shall master.

CHOROS

For those who loved you back, with longing  
stricken.

HERALD

This land yearned for the yearning army, say'st  
thou?

CHOROS

So as to set me oft, from dark mind, groaning.

HERALD

Whence came this ill mind—hatred to the army? 570

CHOROS

Of old, I use, for mischief's physic, silence.

HERALD

And how, the chiefs away, did you fear any?

CHOROS

So that now,—late thy word,—much joy were—  
dying!

HERALD

For well have things been worked out: these,—  
in much time,  
Some of them, one might say, had luck in falling, 575  
While some were faulty: since who, gods excepted,

## AGAMEMNON

Goes, through the whole time of his life, ungrieving?  
 For labours should I tell of, and bad lodgments,  
 Narrow deckways ill-strewn, too,—what the day's  
     woe

We did not groan at getting for our portion? 580  
 As for land-things, again, on went more hatred!  
 Since beds were ours hard by the foemen's  
     ramparts,

And, out of heaven and from the earth, the meadow  
 Dews kept a-sprinkle, an abiding damage  
 Of vestures, making hair a wild-beast matting. 585  
 Winter, too, if one told of it—bird-slaying—  
 Such as, unbearable, Idaian snow brought—  
 Or heat, when waveless, on its noontide couches  
 Without a wind, the sea would slumber falling  
 —Why must one mourn these? O'er and gone  
     is labour: 590

O'er and gone is it, even to those dead ones,  
 So that no more again they mind uprising.  
 Why must we tell in numbers those deprived ones,  
 And the live man be vexed with fate's fresh  
     outbreak?

Rather, I bid full farewell to misfortunes! 595  
 For us, the left from out the Argeian army,  
 The gain beats, nor does sorrow counterbalance.  
 So that 't is fitly boasted of, this sunlight,  
 By us, o'er sea and land the aery flyers,  
 "Troia at last taking, the band of Argives 600  
 Hang up such trophies to the gods of Hellas  
 Within their domes—new glory to grow ancient!"  
 Such things men having heard must praise the  
     city

And army-leaders: and the grace which wrought  
     them—

Of Zeus, shall honoured be. Thou hast my  
     whole word. 605

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS

O'ercome by words, their sense I do not gainsay.  
For, aye this breeds youth in the old—"to learn  
well."

But these things most the house and Klutaimnestra  
Concern, 't is likely: while they make me rich, too.

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

I shouted long ago, indeed, for joyance, 610  
When came that first night-messenger of fire  
Proclaiming Ilion's capture and dispersion.  
And someone, girding me, said, "Through fire-  
bearers

Persuaded—Troia to be sacked now, thinkest?  
Truly, the woman's way,—high to lift heart up!" 615  
By such words I was made seem wit-bewildered:  
Yet still I sacrificed; and,—female-song with,—  
A shout one man and other, through the city,  
Set up, congratulating in the gods' seats,  
Soothing the incense-eating flame right fragrant. 620  
And now, what's more, indeed, why need'st thou  
tell me?

I of the king himself shall learn the whole word:  
And,—as may best be,—I my revered husband  
Shall hasten, as he comes back, to receive: for—  
What's to a wife sweeter to see than this light 625  
(Her husband, by the god saved, back from war-  
fare)

So as to open gates? This tell my husband—  
To come at soonest to his loving city.  
A faithful wife at home may he find, coming!  
Such an one as he left—the dog o' the household— 630  
Trusty to him, adverse to the ill-minded,  
And, in all else, the same: no signet-impress  
Having done harm to, in that time's duration.

## AGAMEMNON

I know nor pleasure, nor blameworthy converse  
With any other man more than—bronze-dippings! 635

HERALD

Such boast as this—brimful of the veracious—  
Is, for a high-born dame, not bad to send forth!

CHOROS

Ay, she spoke thus to thee—that hast a knowledge  
From clear interpreters—a speech most seemly.  
But speak thou, herald! Meneleos I ask of: 640  
If he, returning, back in safety also  
Will come with you—this land's beloved chieftain?

HERALD

There's no way I might say things false and  
pleasant  
For friends to reap the fruits of through a long time.

CHOROS

How then if, speaking good, things true thou  
chance on? 645

HERALD

For not well-hidden things become they, sundered.  
The man has vanished from the Achaic army,  
He and his ship too. I announce no falsehood.

CHOROS

Whether forth-putting openly from Ilion,  
Or did storm—wide woe—snatch him from the  
army? 650

HERALD

Like topping bowman, thou hast touched the  
target,  
And a long sorrow hast succinctly spoken.

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS

Whether, then, of him, as a live or dead man  
Was the report by other sailors bruited?

## HERALD

Nobody knows so as to tell out clearly 655  
Excepting Helios who sustains earth's nature.

## CHOROS

How say'st thou then, did storm the naval army  
Attack and end, by the celestials' anger?

## HERALD

It suits not to defile a day auspicious  
With ill-announcing speech : distinct each god's  
due : 660

And when a messenger with gloomy visage  
To a city bears a fall'n host's woes—God ward  
off!—

One popular wound that happens to the city,  
And many sacrificed from many households—  
Men, scourged by that two-thonged whip Ares  
loves so, 665

Double spear-headed curse, bloody yoke-  
couple,—  
Of woes like these, doubtless, whoe'er comes  
weighted,

Him does it suit to sing the Erinues' paian.  
But who, of matters saved a glad-news-bringer,  
Comes to a city in good estate rejoicing. . . . 670  
How shall I mix good things with evil, telling  
Of storm against the Achaioi, urged by gods'  
wrath?

For they swore league, being arch-foes before that,  
Fire and the sea : and plighted troth approved they,

## AGAMEMNON

Destroying the unhappy Argeian army. 675  
 At night began the bad-wave-outbreak evils ;  
 For, ships against each other Threkian breezes  
 Shattered : and these, butted at in a fury  
 By storm and typhoon, with surge rain-resound-  
 ing,—  
 Off they went, vanished, thro' a bad herd's  
 whirling. 680  
 And, when returned the brilliant light of Helios,  
 We view the Aigaian sea on flower with corpses  
 Of men Achaian and with naval ravage.  
 But us indeed, and ship, unhurt i' the hull too,  
 Either someone outstole us or outprayed us— 685  
 Some god—no man it was the tiller touching.  
 And Fortune, saviour, willing on our ship sat.  
 So as it neither had in harbour wave-surge  
 Nor ran aground against a shore all rocky.  
 And then, the water-Haides having fled from 690  
 In the white day, not trusting to our fortune,  
 We chewed the cud in thoughts—this novel sorrow  
 O' the army labouring and badly pounded.  
 And now—if anyone of them is breathing—  
 They talk of us as having perished : why not ? 695  
 And we—that they the same fate have, imagine.  
 May it be for the best ! Meneleos, then,  
 Foremost and specially to come, expect thou !  
 If (that is) any ray o' the sun reports him  
 Living and seeing too—by Zeus' contrivings, 700  
 Not yet disposed to quite destroy the lineage—  
 Some hope is he shall come again to household.  
 Having heard such things, know, thou truth art  
 hearing !

### CHOROS

Who may he have been that named thus wholly  
 with exactitude—

## AGAMEMNON

(Was he someone whom we see not, by forecast-  
     ings of the future 705  
 Guiding tongue in happy mood ?)  
 —Her with battle for a bridegroom, on all sides  
     contention-wooed,  
 Helena ? Since—mark the suture !—  
 Ship's-Hell, Man's-Hell, City's-Hell,  
 From the delicately-pompous curtains that pavilion  
     well, 710  
 Forth, by favour of the gale  
 Of earth-born Zephuros did she sail.  
 Many shield-bearers, leaders of the pack,  
 Sailed too upon their track,  
 Theirs who had directed oar, 715  
 Then visible no more,  
 To Simois' leaf-luxuriant shore—  
 For sake of strife all gore !

To Ilion Wrath, fulfilling her intent,  
 This marriage-care—the rightly named so—sent : 720  
 In after-time, for the tables' abuse  
 And that of the hearth-partaker Zeus,  
 Bringing to punishment  
 Those who honoured with noisy throat  
 The honour of the bride, the hymenæal note 725  
 Which did the kinsfolk then to singing urge.  
 But, learning a new hymn for that which was,  
 The ancient city of Priamos  
 Groans probably a great and general dirge,  
 Denominating Paris 730  
 “The man that miserably marries :”—  
 She who, all the while before,  
 A life, that was a general dirge  
 For citizens' unhappy slaughter, bore.

And thus a man, by no milk's help, 735

## AGAMEMNON

Within his household reared a lion's whelp  
That loved the teat  
In life's first festal stage :  
Gentle as yet,  
A true child-lover, and, to men of age, 740  
A thing whereat pride warms ;  
And oft he had it in his arms  
Like any new-born babe, bright-faced, to hand  
Wagging its tail, at belly's strict command.

But in due time upgrown, 745  
The custom of progenitors was shown :  
For—thanks for sustenance repaying  
With ravage of sheep slaughtered—  
It made unbidden feast ;  
With blood the house was watered, 750  
To household came a woe there was no staying :  
Great mischief many-slaying !  
From God it was—some priest  
Of Até, in the house, by nurture thus increased.  
At first, then, to the city of Ilion went 755  
A soul, as I might say, of windless calm—  
Wealth's quiet ornament,  
An eyes'-dart bearing balm,  
Love's spirit-biting flower.  
But—from the true course bending— 760  
She brought about, of marriage, bitter ending :  
Ill-resident, ill-mate, in power  
Passing to the Priamidai—by sending  
Of Hospitable Zeus—  
Erinus for a bride,—to make brides mourn, her  
dower. 765

Spoken long ago  
Was the ancient saying  
Still among mortals staying :



## AGAMEMNON

“Man’s great prosperity at height of rise  
Engenders offspring nor unchilded dies ; 770  
And, from good fortune, to such families,  
Buds forth insatiate woe.”

Whereas, distinct from any,  
Of my own mind I am :  
For ’t is the unholy deed begets the many, 775  
Resembling each its dam.

Of households that correctly estimate,  
Ever a beauteous child is born of Fate.  
But ancient Arrogance delights to generate  
Arrogance, young and strong mid mortals’ sorrow, 780  
Or now, or then, when comes the appointed  
morrow.

And she bears young Satiety ;  
And, fiend with whom nor fight nor war can be,  
Unholy Daring—twin black Curses  
Within the household, children like their nurses. 785

But Justice shines in smoke-grimed habitations,  
And honours the well-omened life ;  
While,—gold-besprinkled stations  
Where the hands’ filth is rife,  
With backward-turning eyes 790  
Leaving,—to holy seats she hies,  
Not worshipping the power of wealth  
Stamped with applause by stealth :  
And to its end directs each thing begun.

Approach then, my monarch, of Troia the sacker,  
of Atreus the son ! 795  
How ought I address thee, how ought I revere  
thee,—nor yet overhitting  
Nor yet underbending the grace that is fitting ?  
Many of mortals hasten to honour the seeming-  
to-be—

## AGAMEMNON

Passing by justice : and, with the ill-faring, to  
groan as he groans all are free.  
But no bite of the sorrow their liver has reached to : 800  
They say with the joyful,—one outside on each, too,  
As they force to a smile smileless faces.  
But whoever is good at distinguishing races  
In sheep of his flock—it is not for the eyes  
Of a man to escape such a shepherd's surprise, 805  
As they seem, from a well-wishing mind,  
In watery friendship to fawn and be kind.  
Thou to me, then, indeed, sending an army for  
Helena's sake,  
(I will not conceal it) wast—oh, by no help of the  
Muses!—depicted  
Not well of thy midriff the rudder directing,—con-  
victed 810  
Of bringing a boldness they did not desire to the  
men with existence at stake.  
But now—from no outside of mind, nor unlov-  
ingly—gracious thou art  
To those who have ended the labour, fulfilling  
their part ;  
And in time shalt thou know, by inquiry instructed,  
Who of citizens justly, and who not to purpose,  
the city conducted. 815

## AGAMEMNON

First, indeed, Argos, and the gods, the local,  
'T is right addressing—those with me the partners  
In this return and right things done the city  
Of Priamos : gods who, from no tongue hearing  
The rights o' the cause, for Ilion's fate man-  
slaught'rous 820  
Into the bloody vase, not oscillating,  
Put the vote-pebbles, while, o' the rival vessel,  
Hope rose up to the lip-edge : filled it was not.

## AGAMEMNON

By smoke the captured city is still conspicuous :  
 Até's burnt offerings live : and, dying with them, 825  
 The ash sends forth the fulsome blasts of riches.  
 Of these things, to the gods grace many-mindful  
 'T is right I render, since both nets outrageous  
 We built them round with, and, for sake of woman,  
 It did the city to dust—the Argeian monster, 830  
 The horse's nestling, the shield-bearing people  
 That made a leap, at setting of the Pleiads,  
 And, vaulting o'er the tower, the raw-flesh-feeding  
 Lion licked up his fill of blood tyrannic.  
 I to the gods indeed prolonged this preface ; 835  
 But—as for *thy* thought, I remember hearing—  
 I say the same, and thou co-pleader hast me.  
 Since few of men this faculty is born with—  
 To honour, without grudge, their friend, suc-  
 cessful.  
 For moody, on the heart, a poison seated 840  
 Its burthen doubles to who gained the sickness :  
 By his own griefs he is himself made heavy,  
 And out-of-door prosperity seeing groans at.  
 Knowing, I 'd call (for well have I experienced)  
 “ Fellowship's mirror,” “ phantom of a shadow,” 845  
 Those seeming to be mighty gracious to me :  
 While just Odusseus—he who sailed not willing—  
 When joined on, was to me the ready trace-horse.  
 This of him, whether dead or whether living,  
 I say. For other city-and-gods' concernment— 850  
 Appointing common courts, in full assemblage  
 We will consult. And as for what holds seemly—  
 How it may lasting stay well, must be counselled :  
 While what has need of medicines Paionian  
 We, either burning or else cutting kindly, 855  
 Will make endeavour to turn pain from sickness.  
 And now into the domes and homes by altar  
 Going, I to the gods first raise the right-hand—

## AGAMEMNON

They who, far sending, back again have brought me.  
And Victory, since she followed, fixed remain she! 860

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Men, citizens, Argeians here, my worships!  
I shall not shame me, consort-loving manners  
To tell before you : for in time there dies off  
The diffidence from people. Not from others  
Learning, I of myself will tell the hard life 865  
I bore so long as this man was 'neath Ilion.  
First : for a woman, from the male divided,  
To sit at home alone, is monstrous evil—  
Hearing the many rumours back-revenging :  
And for now This to come, now That bring after 870  
Woe, and still worsewoe, bawling in the household!  
And truly, if so many wounds had chanced on  
My husband here, as homeward used to dribble  
Report, he's pierced more than a net to speak of!  
While, were he dying (as the words abounded) 875  
A triple-bodied Geruon the Second,  
Plenty above—for loads below I count not—  
Of earth a three-share cloak he'd boast of taking,  
Once only dying in each several figure!  
Because of suchlike rumours back-revenging, 880  
Many the halters from my neck, above head,  
Others than / loosed—loosed from neck by main  
force!

From this cause, sure, the boy stands not beside me—  
Possessor of our troth-plights, thine and mine too—  
As ought Orestes : be not thou astonished! 885  
For, him brings up our well-disposed guest-captive  
Strophios the Phokian—ills that told on both sides  
To me predicting—both of thee 'neath Ilion  
The danger, and if anarchy's mob-uproar  
Should overthrow thy council; since 't is born with 890  
Mortals,—whoe'er has fallen, the more to kick him.

## AGAMEMNON

Such an excuse, I think, no cunning carries !  
 As for myself—why, of my wails the rushing  
 Fountains are dried up : not in them a drop more !  
 And in my late-to-bed eyes I have damage, 895  
 Bewailing what concerned thee, those torch-  
 holdings

For ever unattended to. In dreams—why,  
 Beneath the light wing-beats o' the gnat, I woke up  
 As he went buzzing—sorrows that concerned thee  
 Seeing, that filled more than their fellow-sleep-time. 900  
 Now, all this having suffered, from soul grief-free  
 I would style this man here the dog o' the stables,  
 The saviour forestay of the ship, the high roof's  
 Ground-prop, son sole-begotten to his father,  
 —Ay, land appearing to the sailors past hope, 905  
 Loveliest day to see after a tempest,  
 To the wayfaring ~~one~~ athirst a well-spring,  
 —The joy, in short, of 'scaping all that 's—fatal !  
 I judge him worth addresses such as these are  
 —Envy stand off!—for many those old evils 910  
 We underwent. And now, to me—dear headship!—  
 Dismount thou from this car, not earthward setting  
 The foot of thine, O king, that 's Ilion's spoiler !  
 Slave-maids, why tarry?—whose the task allotted  
 To strew the soil o' the road with carpet-spreadings. 915  
 Immediately be purple-strewn the pathway,  
 So that to home unhop'd may lead him—Justice !  
 As for therest, care shall—by no sleep conquered—  
 Dispose things—justly (gods to aid !) appointed.

## AGAMEMNON

Offspring of Leda, of my household warder, 920  
 Suitably to my absence hast thou spoken,  
 For long the speech thou didst outstretch ! But aptly  
 To praise—from others ought to go this favour.  
 And for the rest,—not me, in woman's fashion,

## AGAMEMNON

Mollify, nor—as mode of barbarous man is— 925  
To me gape forth a groundward-falling clamour !  
Nor, strewing it with garments, make my passage  
Envied ! Gods, sure, with these behoves we honour:  
But, for a mortal on these varied beauties  
To walk—to me, indeed, is nowise fear-free. 930  
I say—as man, not god, to me do homage !  
Apart from foot-mats both and varied vestures,  
Renown is loud, and—not to lose one's senses,  
God's greatest gift. Behoves we him call happy  
Who has brought life to end in loved well-being. 935  
If all things I might manage thus—brave man, I !

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Come now, this say, nor feign a feeling to me !

AGAMEMNON

With feeling, know indeed, I do not tamper !

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Vowed'st thou to the gods, in fear, to act thus ?

AGAMEMNON

If any, / well knew resolve I outspoke. 940

KLUTAIMNESTRA

What think'st thou Priamos had done, thus victor ?

AGAMEMNON

On varied vests—I do think—he had passaged.

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Then, do not, struck with awe at human censure. . . .

AGAMEMNON

Well, popular mob-outcry much avails too.

# AGAMEMNON

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Ay, but the unenvied is not the much valued. 945

AGAMEMNON

Sure, 't is no woman's part to long for battle.

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Why, to the prosperous, even suits a beating.

AGAMEMNON

What? thou this beating us in war dost prize too?

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Persuade thee! power, for once, grant *me*—and willing!

AGAMEMNON

But if this seem so to thee—shoes, let someone 950  
Loose under, quick—foot's serviceable carriage!  
And me, on these sea-products walking, may no  
Grudge from a distance, from the god's eye,  
strike at!

For great shame were my strewment-spoiling—  
riches

Spoiling with feet, and silver-purchased textures! 955  
Of these things, thus then. But this female-  
stranger

Tenderly take inside! Who conquers mildly  
God, from afar, benignantly regardeth.  
For, willing, no one wears a yoke that 's servile:  
And she, of many valuables, outpicked 960  
The flower, the army's gift, myself has followed.  
So,—since to hear thee, I am brought about thus,—  
I go into the palace—purples treading.

# AGAMEMNON

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

There is the sea—and what man shall exhaust it?—  
Feeding much purple's worth-its-weight-in-silver 965  
Dye, ever fresh and fresh, our garments' tincture ;  
At home, such wealth, king, we begin—by gods'  
help—

With having, and to lack, the household knows not.  
Of many garments had I vowed a treading  
(In oracles if fore-enjoined the household) 970  
Of this dear soul the safe-return-price scheming !  
For, root existing, foliage goes up houses,  
O'erspreading shadow against Seirios dog-star ;  
And, thou returning to the hearth domestic,  
Warmth, yea, in winter dost thou show returning. 975  
And when, too, Zeus works, from the green-grape  
acid,

Wine—then, already, cool in houses cometh—  
The perfect man his home perambulating !  
Zeus, Zeus Perfecter, these my prayers perfect thou !  
Thy care be—yea—of things thou mayst make  
perfect ! 980

## CHOROS

Wherefore to me, this fear—  
Groundedly stationed here  
Fronting my heart, the portent-watcher—flits she ?  
Wherefore should prophet-play  
The uncalled and unpaid lay, 985  
Nor—having spat forth fear, like bad dreams—  
sits she

On the mind's throne beloved—well-suasive  
Boldness ?

For time, since, by a throw of all the hands,  
The boat's stern-cables touched the sands,  
Has past from youth to oldness,— 990  
When under Ilion rushed the ship-borne bands.



## AGAMEMNON

And from my eyes I learn—  
Being myself my witness—their return.  
Yet, all the same, without a lyre, my soul,  
Itself its teacher too, chants from within 995  
Erinus' dirge, not having now the whole  
Of Hope's dear boldness : nor my inwards sin—  
The heart that 's rolled in whirls against the  
mind  
Justly presageful of a fate behind.  
But I pray—things false, from my hope, may fall 1000  
Into the fate that 's not-fulfilled-at-all !

Especially at least, of health that 's great  
The term 's insatiable : for, its weight  
—A neighbour, with a common wall between—  
Ever will sickness lean ; 1005  
And destiny, her course pursuing straight,  
Has struck man's ship against a reef unseen.  
Now, when a portion, rather than the treasure,  
Fear casts from sling, with peril in right measure,  
It has not sunk—the universal freight, 1010  
(With misery freighted over-full)  
Nor has fear whelmed the hull.  
Then too the gift of Zeus,  
Two-handedly profuse,  
Even from the furrows' yield for yearly use 1015  
Has done away with famine, the disease ;  
But blood of man to earth once falling—deadly,  
black—  
In times ere these,—  
Who may, by singing spells, call back ?  
Zeus had not else stopped one who rightly knew 1020  
The way to bring the dead again.  
But, did not an appointed Fate constrain  
The Fate from gods, to bear no more than due,  
My heart, outstripping what tongue utters,

## AGAMEMNON

Would have all out : which now, in darkness,  
mutter's 1025  
Moodily grieved, nor ever hopes to find  
How she a word in season may unwind  
From out the enkindling mind.

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Take thyself in, thou too—I say, Kassandra !  
Since Zeus—not angrily—in household placed thee 1030  
Partaker of hand-sprinklings, with the many  
Slaves stationed, his the Owner's altar close to.  
Descend from out this car, nor be high-minded !  
And truly they do say Alkmené's child once  
Bore being sold, slaves' barley-bread his living. 1035  
If, then, necessity of this lot o'erbalance,  
Much is the favour of old-wealthy masters :  
For those who, never hoping, made fine harvest  
Are harsh to slaves in all things, beyond measure.  
Thou hast—with us—such usage as law warrants. 1040

### CHOROS

To thee it was, she paused plain speech from  
speaking.  
Being inside the fatal nets—obeying,  
Thou mayst obey : but thou mayst disobey too !

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Why, if she is not, in the swallow's fashion,  
Possessed of voice that 's unknown and barbaric, 1045  
I, with speech—speaking in mind's scope—per-  
suade her.

### CHOROS

Follow ! The best—as things now stand—she  
speaks of.  
Obey thou, leaving this thy car-enthronement !

# AGAMEMNON

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Well, with this thing at door, for me no leisure  
To waste time: as concernsthe hearth mid-navelled, 1050  
Already stand the sheep for fireside slaying  
By those who never hoped to have such favour.  
If thou, then, aught of this wilt do, delay not!  
But if thou, being witless, tak'st no word in,  
Speak thou, instead of voice, with hand as Kars do! 1055

CHOROS

She seems a plain interpreter in need of,  
The stranger! and her way—a beast's new-  
captured!

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Why, she is mad, sure,—hears her own bad  
senses,—  
Who, while she comes, leaving a town new-  
captured,  
Yet knows not how to bear the bit o' the bridle 1060  
Before she has out-frothed her bloody fierceness.  
Not I—throwing away more words—will shamed  
be!

CHOROS

But I,—for I compassionate,—will chafe not.  
Come, O unhappy one, this car vacating,  
Yielding to this necessity, prove yoke's use! 1065

KASSANDRA

Otototoi, Gods, Earth,—  
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS

Why didst thou “ototoi” concerning Loxias?  
Since he is none such as to suit a mourner.

# AGAMEMNON

KASSANDRA

Otototoi, Gods, Earth,—  
Apollon, Apollon !

1070

CHOROS

Ill-boding here again the god invokes she  
—Nowise empowered in woes to stand by helpful.

KASSANDRA

Apollon, Apollon,  
Guard of the ways, my destroyer !  
For thou hast quite, this second time, destroyed me.

1075

CHOROS

To prophesy she seems of her own evils :  
Remains the god-gift to the slave-soul present.

KASSANDRA

Apollon, Apollon,  
Guard of the ways, my destroyer !  
Ha, whither hast thou led me ? to what roof now ?

1080

CHOROS

To the Atreidai's roof : if this thou know'st not,  
I tell it thee, nor this wilt thou call falsehood.

KASSANDRA

How ! How !  
God-hated, then ! Of many a crime it knew—  
Self-slaying evils, halters too :  
Man's-shambles, blood-besprinkler of the ground !

1085

CHOROS

She seems to be good-nosed, the stranger : dog-  
like,  
She snuffs indeed the victims she will find there.

# AGAMEMNON

KASSANDRA

How ! How ! 1090  
By the witnesses here I am certain now !  
These children bewailing their slaughters—flesh  
dressed in the fire  
And devoured by their sire !

CHOROS

Ay, we have heard of thy soothsaying glory,  
Doubtless : but prophets none are we in scent of ! 1095

KASSANDRA

Ah, gods, what ever does she meditate ?  
What this new anguish great ?  
Great in the house here she meditates ill  
Such as friends cannot bear, cannot cure it : and  
still  
Off stands all Resistance 1100  
Afar in the distance !

CHOROS

Of these I witless am—these prophesyings.  
But those I knew : for the whole city bruises them.

KASSANDRA

Ah, unhappy one, this thou consummatest ?  
Thy husband, thy bed's common guest, 1105  
In the bath having brightened . . . How shall I  
declare  
Consummation ? It soon will be there :  
For hand after hand she outstretches,  
At life as she reaches !

CHOROS

Nor yet I've gone with thee ! for—after riddles— 1110  
Now, in blind oracles, I feel resourceless.

# AGAMEMNON

KASSANDRA

Eh, eh, papai, papai,  
What this, I espy?  
Some net of Haides undoubtedly !  
Nay, rather, the snare 1115  
Is she who has share  
In his bed, who takes part in the murder there !  
But may a revolt—  
Unceasing assault—  
On the Race, raise a shout 1120  
Sacrificial, about  
A victim—by stoning—  
For murder atoning !

CHOROS

What this Erinus which i' the house thou callest  
To raise her cry? Not me thy word enlightens ! 1125  
To my heart has run  
A drop of the crocus-dye :  
Which makes for those  
On earth by the spear that lie,  
A common close 1130  
With life's descending sun.  
Swift is the curse begun !

KASSANDRA

How ! How !  
See—see quick !  
Keep the bull from the cow ! 1135  
In the vesture she catching him, strikes him  
now  
With the black-horned trick,  
And he falls in the watery vase !  
Of the craft-killing cauldron I tell thee the  
case !

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS

I would not boast to be a topping critic 1140  
Of oracles : but to some sort of evil  
I liken these. From oracles, what good speech  
To mortals, beside, is sent ?  
It comes of their evils : these arts word-abounding  
that sing the event  
Bring the fear 't is their office to teach. 1145

## KASSANDRA

Ah me, ah me—  
Of me unhappy, evil-destined fortunes !  
For I bewail my proper woe  
As, mine with his, all into one I throw.  
Why hast thou hither me unhappy brought ? 1150  
—Unless that I should die with him—for nought !  
What else was sought ?

## CHOROS

Thou art some mind-mazed creature, god-pos-  
sessed :  
And all about thyself dost wail  
A lay—no lay ! 1155  
Like some brown nightingale  
Insatiable of noise, who—well-away !—  
From her unhappy breast  
Keeps moaning Itus, Itus, and his life  
With evils, flourishing on each side, rife. 1160

## KASSANDRA

Ah me, ah me,  
The fate o' the nightingale, the clear resounder !  
For a body wing-borne have the gods cast round  
her,  
And sweet existence, from misfortunes free :

## AGAMEMNON

But for myself remains a sundering  
With spear, the two-edged thing ! 1165

### CHOROS

Whence hast thou this on-rushing god-involving  
    pain  
And spasms in vain ?  
For, things that terrify,  
With changing unintelligible cry 1170  
Thou strikest up in tune, yet all the while  
After that Orthian style !  
Whence hast thou limits to the oracular road,  
That evils bode ?

### KASSANDRA

Ah me, the nuptials, the nuptials of Paris, the deadly  
    to friends ! 1175  
Ah me, of Skamandros the draught  
Paternal ! There once, to these ends,  
On thy banks was I brought,  
The unhappy ! And now, by Kokutos and  
    Acheron's shore  
I shall soon be, it seems, these my oracles singing  
    once more ! 1180

### CHOROS

Why this word, plain too much,  
Hast thou uttered ? A babe might learn of such !  
I am struck with a bloody bite—here under—  
At the fate woe-wreaking  
Of thee shrill shrieking : 1185  
To me who hear—a wonder !

### KASSANDRA

Ah me, the toils—the toils of the city  
The wholly destroyed : ah, pity,



## AGAMEMNON

Of the sacrificings my father made  
In the ramparts' aid—  
Much slaughter of grass-fed flocks—that afforded  
no cure  
That the city should not, as it does now, the  
burthen endure!  
But I, with the soul on fire,  
Soon to the earth shall cast me and expire.

### CHOROS

To things, on the former consequent,  
Again hast thou given vent :  
And 't is some evil-meaning fiend doth move  
thee,  
Heavily falling from above thee,  
To melodize thy sorrows—else, in singing,  
Calamitous, death-bringing !  
And of all this the end  
I am without resource to apprehend.

### KASSANDRA

Well then, the oracle from veils no longer  
Shall be outlooking, like a bride new-married :  
But bright it seems, against the sun's uprisings  
Breathing, to penetrate thee : so as, wave-like,  
To wash against the rays a woe much greater  
Than this. I will no longer teach by riddles.  
And witness, running with me, that of evils  
Done long ago, I nosing track the footstep !  
For, this same roof here—never quits a Choros  
One-voiced, not well-tuned since no "well" it  
utters :  
And truly having drunk, to get more courage,  
Man's blood—the Komos keeps within the house-  
hold  
—Hard to be sent outside—of sister Furies :

## AGAMEMNON

They hymn their hymn—within the house close  
sitting—

The first beginning curse : in turn spit forth at  
The Brother's bed, to him who spurned it hostile.  
Have I missed aught, or hit I like a bowman?  
False prophet am I,—knock at doors, a babbler? 1220  
Henceforward witness, swearing now, I know not  
By other's word the old sins of this household!

### CHOROS

And how should oath, bond honourably binding,  
Become thy cure? No less I wonder at thee  
—That thou, beyond sea reared, a strange-tongued  
city 1225  
Shouldst hit in speaking, just as if thou stood'st  
by!

### KASSANDRA

Prophet Apollon put me in this office.

### CHOROS

What, even though a god, with longing smitten?

### KASSANDRA

At first, indeed, shame was to me to say this.

### CHOROS

For, more relaxed grows everyone who fares well. 1230

### KASSANDRA

But he was athlete to me—huge grace breathing!

### CHOROS

Well, to the work of children, went ye law's way?

### KASSANDRA

Having consented, I played false to Loxias.

# AGAMEMNON

CHOROS

Already when the wits inspired possessed of?

KASSANDRA

Already townsmen all their woes I foretold. 1235

CHOROS

How wast thou then unhurt by Loxias' anger?

KASSANDRA

I no one aught persuaded, when I sinned thus.

CHOROS

To us, at least, now sooth to say thou seemest.

KASSANDRA

Halloo, halloo, ah, evils!

Again, straightforward foresight's fearful labour 1240

Whirls me, distracting with prelusive last-lays!

Behold ye those there, in the household seated,—

Youngones,—of dreams approaching to the figures?

Children, as if they died by their beloveds—

Hands they have filled with flesh, the meal  
domestic— 1245

Entrails and vitals both, most piteous burthen,

Plain they are holding!—which their father tasted!

For this, I say, plans punishment a certain

Lion ignoble, on the bed that wallows,

House-guard (ah, me!) to the returning master 1250

—Mine, since to bear the slavish yoke behoves me!

The ship's commander, Ilion's desolator,

Knows not what things the tongue of the lewd  
she-dog

Speaking, outspreading, shiny-souled, in fashion

Of Até hid, will reach to, by ill fortune! 1255

## AGAMEMNON

Such things she dares—the female, the male's slayer!

She is . . . how calling her the hateful bite-beast  
May I hit the mark? Some amphisbaina,—Skulla  
Housing in rocks, of mariners the mischief,  
Revelling Haides' mother,—curse, no truce with, 1260  
Breathing at friends! How piously she shouted,  
The all-courageous, as at turn of battle!  
She seems to joy at the back-bringing safety!  
Of this, too, if I nought persuade, all 's one!  
Why?

What is to be will come. And soon thou, present, 1265  
“True prophet all too much” wilt pitying style me.

### CHOROS

Thuestes' feast, indeed, on flesh of children,  
I went with, and I shuddered. Fear too holds me  
Listing what 's true as life, nowise out-imaged.

### KASSANDRA

I say, thou Agamemnon's fate shalt look on. 1270

### CHOROS

Speak good words, O unhappy! Set mouth  
sleeping!

### KASSANDRA

But Paian stands in no stead to the speech here.

### CHOROS

Nay, if the thing be near: but never be it!

### KASSANDRA

Thou, indeed, prayest: they to kill are busy.

### CHOROS

Of what man is it ministered, this sorrow? 1275

# AGAMEMNON

KASSANDRA

There again, wide thou look'st of my foretellings.

CHOROS

For, the fulfiller's scheme I have not gone with.

KASSANDRA

And yet too well I know the speech Hellenic.

CHOROS

For Puthian oracles, thy speech, and hard too.

KASSANDRA

Papai : what fire this ! and it comes upon me ! 1280

Ototoi, Lukeion Apollon, ah me—me !

She, the two-footed lioness that sleeps with

The wolf, in absence of the generous lion,

Kills me the unhappy one : and as a poison

Brewing, to put my price too in the anger, 1285

She vows, against her mate this weapon whetting

To pay him back the bringing me, with slaughter.

Why keep I then these things to make me laughed  
at,

Both wands and, round my neck, oracular fillets ?

Thee, at least, ere my own fate will I ruin : 1290

Go, to perdition falling ! Boons exchange we—

Some other Até in my stead make wealthy !

See there—himself, Apollon stripping from me

The oracular garment ! having looked upon me

—Even in these adornments, laughed by friends at, 1295

As good as foes, i' the balance weighed : and  
vainly—

For, called crazed stroller,—as I had been gipsy,

Beggar, unhappy, starved to death,—I bore it.

And now the Prophet—prophet me undoing,

## AGAMEMNON

Has led away to these so deadly fortunes ! 1300  
Instead of my sire's altar, waits the hack-block  
She struck with first warm bloody sacrificing !  
Yet nowise unavenged of gods will death be :  
For there shall come another, our avenger,  
The mother-slaying scion, father's doomsman : 1305  
Fugitive, wanderer, from this land an exile,  
Back shall he come,—for friends, copestone these  
curses !

For there is sworn a great oath from the gods that  
Him shall bring hither his fallen sire's prostration.  
Why make I then, like an indweller, moaning ? 1310  
Since at the first I foresaw Ilion's city  
Suffering as it has suffered : and who took it,  
Thus by the judgment of the gods are faring.  
I go, will suffer, will submit to dying !  
But, Haides' gates—these same I call, I speak to, 1315  
And pray that on an opportune blow chancing,  
Without a struggle,—blood the calm death bringing  
In easy outflow,—I this eye may close up !

### CHOROS

O much unhappy, but, again, much learned  
Woman, long hast thou outstretched ! But if truly 1320  
Thou knowest thine own fate, how comest that, like to  
A god-led steer, to altar bold thou treadest ?

### KASSANDRA

There's no avoidance,—strangers, no ! Some time  
more !

### CHOROS

He last is, anyhow, by time advantaged.

### KASSANDRA

It comes, the day : I shall by flight gain little. 1325

# AGAMEMNON

CHOROS

But know thou patient art from thy brave spirit !

KASSANDRA

Such things hears no one of the happy-fortuned.

CHOROS

But gloriously to die—for man is grace, sure.

KASSANDRA

Ah, sire, for thee and for thy noble children !

CHOROS

But what thing is it ? What fear turns thee back-  
wards ?

1330

KASSANDRA

Alas, alas !

CHOROS

Why this “ Alas ! ” if 't is no spirit's loathing ?

KASSANDRA

Slaughter blood-dripping does the household  
smell of !

CHOROS

How else ? This scent is of hearth-sacrifices.

KASSANDRA

Such kind of steam as from a tomb is proper !

1335

CHOROS

No Surian honour to the House thou speak'st of !

KASSANDRA

But I will go,—even in the household wailing  
My fate and Agamemnon's. Life suffice me !

## AGAMEMNON

Ah, strangers !

I cry not "ah"—as bird at bush—through terror 1340  
Idly ! to me, the dead, this much bear witness :  
When, for me—woman, there shall die a woman,  
And, for a man ill-wived, a man shall perish !  
This hospitality I ask as dying.

### CHOROS

O sufferer, thee—thy foretold fate I pity. 1345

### KASSANDRA

Yet once for all, to speak a speech, I fain am :  
No dirge, mine for myself ! The sun I pray to,  
Fronting his last light !—to my own avengers—  
That from my hateful slayers they exact too  
Pay for the dead slave—easy-managed hand's work ! 1350

### CHOROS

Alas for mortal matters ! Happy-fortuned,—  
Why, any shade would turn them : if unhappy,  
By throws the wetting sponge has spoiled the  
picture !

And more by much in mortals this I pity.

The being well-to-do— 1355

Insatiate a desire of this

Born with all mortals is,

Nor any is there who

Well-being forces off, aoints

From roofs whereat a finger points, 1360

"No more come in !" exclaiming. This man, too,

To take the city of Priamos did the celestials give,

And, honoured by the god, he homeward comes ;

But now if, of the former, he shall pay

The blood back, and, for those who ceased to live, 1365

Dying, for deaths in turn new punishment he  
dooms—



## AGAMEMNON

Who, being mortal, would not pray  
With an unmischievous  
Daimon to have been born—who would not,  
hearing thus?

AGAMEMNON

Ah me ! I am struck—a right-aimed stroke within  
me !

1370

CHOROS

Silence ! Who is it shouts “stroke”—“right-  
aimedly” a wounded one ?

AGAMEMNON

Ah me ! indeed again,—a second, struck by !

CHOROS

This work seems to me completed by this “Ah  
me” of the king’s ;  
But we somehow may together share in solid  
counsellings.

CHOROS 1

I, in the first place, my opinion tell you :  
—To cite the townsmen, by help-cry, to house here.

1375

CHOROS 2

To me, it seems we ought to fall upon them  
Atquickest—prove the fact by sword fresh-flowing !

CHOROS 3

And I, of such opinion the partaker,  
Vote—to do something : not to wait—the main  
point !

1380

CHOROS 4

’T is plain to see : for they prelude as though of  
A tyranny the signs they gave the city.

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS 5

For we waste time; while they,—this waiting's glory  
Treading to ground,—allow the hand no slumber.

## CHOROS 6

I know not—chancing on some plan—to tell it : 1385  
'T is for the doer to plan of the deed also.

## CHOROS 7

And I am such another : since I 'm schemeless  
How to raise up again by words—a dead man !

## CHOROS 8

What, and, protracting life, shall we give way thus  
To the disgracers of our home, these rulers ? 1390

## CHOROS 9

Why, 't is unbearable : but to die is better :  
For death than tyranny is the riper finish !

## CHOROS 10

What, by the testifying “Ah me” of him,  
Shall we prognosticate the man as perished ?

## CHOROS 11

We must quite know ere speak these things con-  
cerning : 1395  
For to conjecture and “quite know” are two things.

## CHOROS 12

This same to praise I from all sides abound in—  
Clearly to know—Atreides, what he 's doing !

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

Much having been before to purpose spoken,  
The opposite to say I shall not shamed be : 1400

## AGAMEMNON

For how should one, to enemies,—in semblance,  
Friends,—enmity proposing,—sorrow's net-frame  
Enclose, a height superior to outleaping?  
To me, indeed, this struggle of old—not mindless  
Of an old victory—came : with time, I grant you ! 1405  
I stand where I have struck, things once accom-  
plished :

And so have done,—and this deny I shall not,—  
As that his fate was nor to fly nor ward off.  
A wrap-round with no outlet, as for fishes,  
I fence about him—the rich woe of the garment : 1410  
I strike him twice, and in a double “ Ah-me ! ”  
He let his limbs go—*there !* And to him, fallen,  
The third blow add I, giving—of Below-ground  
Zeus, guardian of the dead—the votive favour.  
Thus in the mind of him he rages, falling, 1415  
And blowing forth a brisk blood-spatter, strikes me  
With the dark drop of slaughterous dew—rejoicing  
No less than, at the god-given dewy-comfort,  
The sown-stuff in its birth-throes from the calyx.  
Since so these things are,—Argives, my revered  
here,— 1420

Ye may rejoice—if ye rejoice : but I—boast !  
If it were fit on corpse to pour libation,  
That would be right—right over and above, too !  
The cup of evils in the house he, having  
Filled with such curses, himself coming drinks of. 1425

### CHOROS

We wonder at thy tongue : since bold-mouthed  
truly  
Is she who in such speech boasts o'er her husband !

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Ye test me as I were a witless woman :  
But I—with heart intrepid—to you knowers

## AGAMEMNON

Say (and thou—if thou wilt or praise or blame  
me, 1430  
Comes to the same)—this man is Agamemnon,  
My husband, dead, the work of the right hand  
here,  
Ay, of a just artificer : so things are.

### CHOROS

What evil, O woman, food or drink, earth-bred  
Or sent from the flowing sea, 1435  
Of such having fed  
Didst thou set on thee  
This sacrifice  
And popular cries  
Of a curse on thy head ? 1440  
Off thou hast thrown him, off hast cut  
The man from the city : but—  
Off from the city thyself shalt be  
Cut—to the citizens  
A hate immense ! 1445

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Now, indeed, thou adjudgest exile to me,  
And citizens' hate, and to have popular curses :  
Nothing of this against the man here bringing,  
Who, no more awe-checked than as 't were a  
beast's fate,—  
With sheep abundant in the well-fleeced graze-  
flocks,— 1450  
Sacrificed *his* child,—dearest fruit of travail  
To me,—as song-spell against Threikian blowings.  
Not *him* did it behove thee hence to banish  
—Pollution's penalty ? But hearing *my* deeds  
Justicer rough thou art ! Now, this I tell thee : 1455  
To threaten thus—me, one prepared to have thee  
(On like conditions, thy hand conquering) o'er me

## AGAMEMNON

Rule : but if God the opposite ordain us,  
Thou shalt learn—late taught, certes—to be  
modest.

### CHOROS

Greatly-intending thou art :  
Much-mindful, too, hast thou cried 1460  
(Since thy mind, with its slaughter-outpouring  
part,  
Is frantic) that over the eyes, a patch  
Of blood—with blood to match—  
Is plain for a pride !  
Yet still, bereft of friends, thy fate 1465  
Is—blow with blow to expiate !

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

And this thou hearest—of my oaths, just war-  
rant !  
By who fulfilled things for my daughter, Justice,  
Até, Erinus,—by whose help I slew him,— 1470  
Not mine the fancy—Fear will tread my palace  
So long as on my hearth there burns a fire,  
Aigisthos as before well-caring for me ;  
Since he to me is shield, no small, of boldness.  
Here does he lie—outrager of this female, 1475  
Dainty of all the Chruseids under Iliou ;  
And she—the captive, the soothsayer also  
And couchmate of this man, oracle-speaker,  
Faithful bed-fellow,—ay, the sailors' benches  
They wore in common, nor unpunished did so, 1480  
Since he is—thus ! While, as for her,—swan-  
fashion,  
Her latest having chanted,—dying wailing  
She lies,—to him, a sweetheart : me she brought  
to—  
My bed's by-nicety—the whet of dalliance.

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS

Alas, that some 1485  
Fate would come  
Upon us in quickness—  
Neither much sickness  
Neither bed-keeping—  
And bear unended sleeping, 1490  
Now that subdued  
Is our keeper, the kindest of mood !  
Having borne, for a woman's sake, much strife—  
By a woman he withered from life !  
Ah me ! 1495  
Law-breaking Helena who, one,  
Hast many, so many souls undone  
'Neath Troia ! and now the consummated  
Much-memorable curse  
Hast thou made flower-forth, red 1500  
With the blood no rains disperse,  
That which was then in the House—  
Strife all-subduing, the woe of a spouse.

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

Nowise, of death the fate—  
Burdened by these things—supplicate ! 1505  
Nor on Helena turn thy wrath  
As the man-destroyer, as “she who hath,  
Being but one,  
Many and many a soul undone  
Of the men, the Danaoi ”—  
And wrought immense annoy ! 1510

## CHOROS

Daimon, whoallest  
Upon this household and the double-raced  
Tantalidai, a rule, minded like theirs displaced,

## AGAMEMNON

Thou rulest me with, now, 1515  
Whose heart thou gallest !  
And on the body, like a hateful crow,  
Stationed, all out of tune, his chant to chant  
Doth Something vaunt !

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Now, of a truth, hast thou set upright 1520  
Thy mouth's opinion,—  
Naming the Sprite,  
The triply gross,  
O'er the race that has dominion :  
For through him it is that Eros 1525  
The carnage-licker  
In the belly is bred : ere ended quite  
Is the elder throe—new ichor !

### CHOROS

Certainly, great of might  
And heavy of wrath, the Sprite 1530  
Thou tellest of, in the palace  
(Woe, woe !)  
—An evil tale of a fate  
By Até's malice  
Rendered insatiate ! 1535  
Oh, oh,—  
King, king, how shall I bewEEP thee ?  
From friendly soul whatever say ?  
Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep  
thee  
In impious death, life breathing away. 1540  
O me—me !  
This couch, not free !  
By a slavish death subdued thou art,  
From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

# AGAMEMNON

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

Thou boastest this deed to be mine : 1545  
But leave off styling me  
“The Agamemnonian wife !”  
For, showing himself in sign  
Of the spouse of the corpse thou dost see,  
Did the ancient bitter avenging-ghost 1550  
Of Atreus, savage host,  
Pay the man here as price—  
A full-grown for the young one's sacrifice.

## CHOROS

That no cause, indeed, of this killing art thou,  
Who shall be witness-bearer ? 1555  
How shall he bear it—how ?  
But the sire's avenging-ghost might be in the  
deed a sharer.  
He is forced on and on  
By the kin-born flowing of blood,  
—Black Ares : to where, having gone, 1560  
He shall leave off, flowing done,  
At the frozen-child's-flesh food.  
King, king, how shall I bewEEP thee ?  
From friendly soul whatever say ?  
Thou liest where webs of the spider o'ersweep thee 1565  
In impious death, life breathing away.  
O me—me !  
This couch, not free !  
By a slavish death subdued thou art,  
From the hand, by the two-edged dart. 1570

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

No death “unfit for the free”  
Do I think this man's to be :  
For did not himself a slavish curse



## AGAMEMNON

To his household decree?  
 But the scion of him, myself did nurse— 1575  
 That much-bewailed Iphigeneia, he  
 Having done well by,—and as well, nor worse,  
 Been done to,—let him not in Haides loudly  
 Bear himself proudly!  
 Being by sword-destroying death amerced 1580  
 For that sword's punishment himself inflicted  
 first.

### CHOROS

I at a loss am left—  
 Of a feasible scheme of mind bereft—  
 Where I may turn : for the house is falling :  
 I fear the bloody crash of the rain 1585  
 That ruins the roof as it bursts amain :  
 The warning-drop  
 Has come to a stop.  
 Destiny doth Justice whet  
 For other deed of hurt, on other whetstones  
 yet. 1590  
 Woe, earth, earth—would thou hadst taken *me*  
 Ere I saw the man I see,  
 On the pallet-bed  
 Of the silver-sided bath-vase, dead !  
 Who is it shall bury him, who 1595  
 Sing his dirge? Can it be true  
 That *thou* wilt dare this same to do—  
 Having slain thy husband, thine own,  
 To make his funeral moan :  
 And for the soul of him, in place 1600  
 Of his mighty deeds, a graceless grace  
 To wickedly institute? By whom  
 Shall the tale of praise o'er the tomb  
 At the god-like man be sent—  
 From the truth of his mind as he toils intent? 1605

# AGAMEMNON

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

It belongs not to thee to declare  
This object of care !  
By us did he fall—down there !  
Did he die—down there ! and down, no less,  
We will bury him there, and not beneath 1613  
The wails of the household over his death :  
But Iphigeneia,—with kindness,—  
His daughter,—as the case requires,  
Facing him full, at the rapid-flowing  
Passage of Groans shall—both hands throwing 1615  
Around him—kiss that kindest of sires !

## CHOROS

This blame comes in the place of blame :  
Hard battle it is to judge each claim.  
“ He is borne away who bears away :  
And the killer has all to pay.” 1620  
And this remains while Zeus is remaining,  
“ The doer shall suffer in time ”—for, such his  
ordaining.  
Who may cast out of the House its cursed brood ?  
The race is to Até glued !

## KLUTAIMNESTRA

Thou hast gone into this oracle 1625  
With a true result. For me, then,—I will  
—To the Daimon of the Pleisthenidai  
Making an oath—with all these things comply  
Hard as they are to bear. For the rest—  
Going from out this House, a guest, 1630  
May he wear some other family  
To nought, with the deaths of kin by kin !  
And,—keeping a little part of my goods,—  
Wholly am I contented in

## AGAMEMNON

Having expelled from the royal House 1635  
These frenzied moods  
The mutually-murderous.

### AIGISTHOS

O light propitious of day justice-bringing !  
I may say truly, now, that men's avengers,  
The gods from high, of earth behold the sorrows— 1640  
Seeing, as I have, i' the spun robes of the Erinues,  
This man here lying,—sight to me how pleasant!—  
His father's hands' contrivances repaying.  
For Atreus, this land's lord, of this man father,  
Thuestes, my own father—to speak clearly— 1645  
His brother too,—being i' the rule contested,—  
Drove forth to exile from both town and house-  
hold :  
And, coming back, to the hearth turned, a sup-  
pliant,  
Wretched Thuestes found the fate assured him  
—Not to die, bloodying his paternal threshold 1650  
Just there : but host-wise this man's impious  
father  
Atreus, soul-keenly more than kindly,—seeming  
To joyous hold a flesh-day,—to my father  
Served up a meal, the flesh of his own children.  
The feet indeed and the hands' top divisions 1655  
He hid, high up and isolated sitting :  
But, their unshowing parts in ignorance taking,  
He forthwith eats food—as thou seest—perdi-  
tion  
To the race : and then, 'ware of the deed ill-  
omened,  
He shrieked O !—falls back, vomiting, from the  
carnage, 1660  
And fate on the Pelopidai past bearing  
He prays down—putting in his curse together

## AGAMEMNON

The kicking down o' the feast—that so might  
perish

The race of Pleisthenes entire : and thence is  
That it is given thee to see this man prostrate. 1665

And I was rightly of this slaughter stitch-man :  
Since me,—being third from ten,—with my poor  
father

He drives out—being then a babe in swathe-bands:  
But, grown up, back again has justice brought  
me :

And of this man I got hold—being without-  
doors— 1670

Fitting together the whole scheme of ill-will.  
So, sweet, in fine, even to die were to me,  
Seeing, as I have, this man i' the toils of justice !

### CHOROS

Aigisthos, arrogance in ills I love not.  
Dost thou say—willing, thou didst kill the man  
here, 1675

And, alone, plot this lamentable slaughter ?  
I say—thy head in justice will escape not  
The people's throwing—know that !—stones and  
curses !

### AIGISTHOS

Thou such things soundest—seated at the lower  
Oarage to those who rule at the ship's mid-  
bench ? 1680

Thou shalt know, being old, how heavy is teach-  
ing

To one of the like age—bidden be modest !  
But chains and old age and the pangs of fasting  
Stand out before all else in teaching,—prophets  
At souls'-cure ! Dost not, seeing aught, see this  
too ? 1685

Against goads kick not, lest tript-up thou suffer !

# AGAMEMNON

## CHOROS

Woman, thou,—of him coming new from battle  
Houseguard—thy husband's bed the while disgracing,—  
For the Army-leader didst thou plan this fate too?

## AIGISTHOS

These words too are of groans the prime-begetters! 1690  
Truly a tongue opposed to Orpheus hast thou :  
For he led all things by his voice's grace-charm,  
But thou, upstirring them by these wild yelpings,  
Wilt lead them! Forced, thou wilt appear the  
tamer!

## CHOROS

So—thou shalt be my king then of the Argeians— 1695  
Who, not when for this man his fate thou plannedst,  
Daredst to do this deed—thyself the slayer!

## AIGISTHOS

For, to deceive him was the wife's part, certes :  
*I* was looked after—foe, ay, old-begotten!  
But out of this man's wealth will I endeavour 1700  
To rule the citizens : and the no-man-minder  
—Him will I heavily yoke—by no means trace-  
horse,  
A corned-up colt! but that bad friend in dark-  
ness,  
Famine its housemate, shall behold him gentle.

## CHOROS

Why then, this man here, from a coward spirit, 1705  
Didst not thou slay thyself? But,—helped,—a  
woman,  
The country's pest, and that of gods o' the  
country,

## AGAMEMNON

Killed him! Orestes, where may he see light  
now?

That coming hither back, with gracious fortune,  
Of both these he may be the all-conquering slayer? 1710

### AIGISTHOS

But since this to do thou thinkest—and not talk  
—thou soon shalt know!

Up then, comrades dear! the proper thing to do  
—not distant this!

### CHOROS

Up then! hilt in hold, his sword let everyone aright  
dispose!

### AIGISTHOS

Ay, but I myself too, hilt in hold, do not refuse to  
die.

### CHOROS

Thou wilt die, thou say'st, to who accept it. We  
the chance demand. 1715

### KLUTAIMNESTRA

Nowise, O belovedest of men, may we do other ills!  
To have reaped away these, even, is a harvest  
much to me.

Go, both thou and these the old men, to the homes  
appointed each,

Ere ye suffer! It behoved one do these things  
just as we did:

And if of these troubles there should be enough—  
we may assent 1720

—By the Daimon's heavy heel unfortunately  
stricken ones!

So a woman's counsel hath it—if one judge it  
learning-worth.

# AGAMEMNON

AIGISTHOS

But to think that these at me the idle tongue  
should thus o'erbloom,  
And throw out such words—the Daimon's power  
experimenting on—  
And, of modest knowledge missing,—me, the  
ruler, . . .

1725

CHOROS

Ne'er may this befall Argeians—wicked man to  
fawn before!

AIGISTHOS

Anyhow, in after days, will I, yes, I, be at thee yet!

CHOROS

Not if hither should the Daimon make Orestes  
straightway come!

AIGISTHOS

O, I know, myself, that fugitives on hopes are  
pasture-fed!

CHOROS

Do thy deed, get fat, defiling justice, since the  
power is thine!

1730

AIGISTHOS

Know that thou shalt give me satisfaction for this  
folly's sake!

CHOROS

Boast on, bearing thee audacious, like a cock his  
females by!

# AGAMEMNON

KLUTAIMNESTRA

Have not thou respect for these same idle yelp-  
ings ! I and thou  
Will arrange it, o'er this household ruling ex-  
cellently well.

END OF VOL. VIII